



Governor Antonio de Noli and His Family in the Cape Verde Islands and Portugal: Discoverers, Colonizers, and Governors, 1460-1704

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Introduction

One generation before Christopher Columbus saw America, a mariner named Antonio de Noli sailed from the Genoa region of Italy into the Atlantic Ocean where de Noli discovered the uninhabited Cape Verde Islands off the coast of West Africa around 1460 (map). Two years later he colonized them and ruled the insular colony until 1476, as a governor working for the Portuguese royal family. In that year, 1476, Spanish troops invaded the Cape Verde Islands and captured Governor de Noli. They took him to Spain, as a prisoner of war, but King Ferdinand of Spain freed the governor. Following his release Governor Antonio de Noli disappeared and was never seen again, but his family continued to live and prosper in the Cape Verde Islands.

Although Governor Antonio de Noli left no writings, his journeys to West Africa, along with those of his extended family are stored in archives across Portugal and Spain. Manuscripts about the de Noli family include fifteenth century Portuguese and Spanish royal edicts, travel narratives, royal chronicles, maps, and genealogical records. Economic data about the early de Noli family can also be found in fiscal records of revenues collected by the Portuguese government and the Catholic Church, when de Noli merchants paid taxes in the Cape Verde Islands. Some de Noli family members paid import taxes to the Portuguese government and the Catholic Church when they transported human captives and merchandise from West Africa to the Cape Verde Islands in the early 1500s. Other family members paid property taxes in the Cape Verde Islands. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the de Noli family members were wealthy and their names appear in various Cape Verde and Catholic Church tax receipts.¹

Some de Noli family members made their money legally through real estate and shipping. The governor's family owned the best lands in the Cape Verde Islands, and had plantations that grew cotton and sugar cane worked by enslaved Africans. The family also owned a number of ships that transported merchants and their cargo to and from Portugal, the Cape Verde Islands, and near-by West Africa. In 1472, however, some members of the de Noli clan made a lot of money illegally when they sailed their own ships from the Cape Verde Islands to trade on the Gold Coast of modern-day Ghana. The de Noli clan made a fortune in Gold Coast gold. Governor Antonio de Noli and his family hid their immense wealth from people in Europe, and spent some of the gold purchasing privacy.

It was easy during the fifteenth century for ship-owning men who lived on distant tropical Atlantic islands, far from Europe to remain anonymous. It is possible the first de Noli ship captains lived aboard their vessels when they left the Cape Verde Islands. Some ship captains really did not like land, and in the tropics, others went ashore mainly during the cooler nights. The northern Italian de Noli clan may not have enjoyed the hot tropical sun. During this epoch, people carried no picture identification, no passport. There were no immigration agencies, and no personal identification cards—especially for Italian mariners living on Portuguese islands in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. The difficulty of ascertaining a person's true

¹ Two Cape Verde customs receipt books list members of the de Noli family as paying taxes to the Portuguese government and the Catholic church. The first is dated 1513-1516 and the second 1528.

Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Nucleo Antigo, livro 757, and Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Nucleo Antigo, livro 528, for the year 1528.

identity in Early Modern Europe is seen in mid sixteenth century France where an imposter assumed Martin Guerre's identity, and fooled his family, his friends and even wife, before being exposed as an imposter.²

This study begins with Antonio de Noli, patriarch of the Atlantic branch of the de Noli family tree, during the second half of the fifteenth century. The adventure started a little before 1460 when de Noli sailed from northern Italy to Spain, Portugal, Madeira, the Canaries and West Africa. He discovered the uninhabited Cape Verde Islands and colonized them for his family and a prince in Portugal. In 1477 Governor de Noli vanished, but his family continued to live in the Cape Verdes. Part 2 of the study reconstructs the lives of family members who lived in the Cape Verdes with Governor de Noli. They include his younger brother Bartholomeu and their nephew Raphael de Noli. All three men sailed from Italy to Portugal around 1460. Each of the original three de Noli men owned and captained their own ship. Each vessel had its own crew consisting of young able bodied Italian men.

Part 3 concentrates on the daughter of Governor Antonio de Noli, a Portuguese noblewoman named Dona Branca de Aguiar. She inherited her father's Cape Verde governorship in 1497, but received her noble title from her Portuguese mother, Dona de Aguiar or from the king of Portugal. During the early sixteenth century, the governess and other second-generation de Noli family members lived in the Cape Verde Islands and were rich, powerful Portuguese nobles who governed the islands and controlled the maritime economy.

The fourth part of this study looks at another de Noli ship captain, Andre de Noli, who lived in the Cape Verde Islands from the 1550s to 1630s. His name was mis-transcribed as Andre Donelha, probably by a seventeenth-century archivist working at the library, Biblioteca da Ajuda, in Portugal. In 1625 Andre de Noli edited his diary which presented a detailed autobiographical narrative about his maritime adventures in the Cape Verde Islands and near-by West Africa. He signed the diary, which helps to identify the author as a member of the de Noli family. The diary provides data about the first Cape Verde governor Antonio de Noli, and other family members, who lived a century before him. Additional historical manuscripts about de Noli family members are scattered in archives and libraries across Portugal and its former colonies in Madeira and the Cape Verde

² Natalie Z. Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

Islands. However, the oldest manuscripts are found in Portugal, and not in the former colonies.

Many members of the de Noli family were Portuguese nobles, and the nobility kept extensive written genealogical records. To be a Portuguese noble meant that one had noble parents and grandparents, who were also nobles. However, this was not the case of nobles in the de Noli family, whose parents and grandparents were not recorded in genealogical records. There is no explanation for this lack of protocol, but it is important, and is very rare. The truth may hide a family secret, perhaps by explaining the de Noli's rapid upward mobility into the elite Portuguese nobility. It is especially difficult to explain the rise of the family after Bartholomeu de Noli murdered a priest in 1466 and his older brother Governor Antonio de Noli committed treason against Portugal in 1477—but, be that as it may, these crimes did not stop the upward mobility of the de Noli clan in the Cape Verde Islands.

A major hurdle in reconstructing the de Noli family history in the Cape Verde Islands during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is the difficulty in reading the original Portuguese manuscripts written during those years (see the appendix for an example of sixteenth-century Portuguese). To read fifteenth-sixteenth-, and even some seventeenth-century Portuguese manuscripts one requires training in Portuguese paleography—the interpretation of ancient written Portuguese manuscripts. Early Modern Portuguese scribes had difficulty to read handwriting that was filled with numerous abbreviations and multiple symbols. Modern dictionaries of Portuguese paleography provide meanings for ancient Portuguese words, abbreviations, and symbols.³ Early Modern Portuguese had no standardized spelling, and each scribe wrote a word as it sounded to him. A foreign name, like de Noli, had as many different spellings as the Portuguese scribes who wrote it down. Modern researchers not versed in Portuguese paleography must rely on transcribed, edited, and published Portuguese manuscripts. When the published manuscript has an error, scholars repeat the error over and over, because they cannot read the original manuscript.

The fifth and final section of this study looks at two de Noli family members, one who was a German noble in the Portuguese Cape Verde Islands, and another who was a Cape Verdean author, in early eighteenth century. Since the Cape Verde Islands was a small colony, there were not enough eligible Portuguese nobles to

³ E. Borges Nunes, *Abreviaturas Paleograficas Portuguesas* (Lisboa: FL., 1981).

marry each other. Thus, Portuguese, Italian and German noble families intermarried in the islands. Noble families who governed different Portuguese insular colonies in the Azores, Madeiras, Cape Verdes and Sao Tome were also linked by marriage.

This brief study is a collective-biography of the Italian discoverer Antonio de Noli and his extended family, which lived mainly in the Cape Verde Islands from the 1460s to 1704. The study follows the de Noli clan on their maritime adventures from native Italy to Spain, Portugal, Madeira, the Canaries, West Africa and especially the Cape Verde Islands—decades before and after Columbus sailed the Atlantic Ocean. The research is based primarily on Portuguese archival manuscripts written during the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Also included are data from Portuguese, Spanish, French and English publications. The study follows a chronological time-frame, beginning with Antonio de Noli back in 1460, and ending with Paulino da Nolla da Andrade, in 1703. Tales of different de Noli family members form written strands of family history in an insular Cape Verde society, located off the coast of West Africa. Throughout this study the family name is spelled, de Noli, because that is the way modern family members spell their name; however, the archival and printed records have many different spellings of the four-letter surname Noli.⁴

The Beginning: Antonio de Noli sails from Italy to Portugal around 1460

Two twentieth-century Cape Verdean scholars, Christiano Senna Barcellos⁵ and Antonio Carreira have written about early Cape Verde history.⁶ They used fifteenth-century archival documents to conclude that a little before 1460, the

⁴ In my initial research I spelled the family name de nolle, because that is the way the sixteenth-century Cape Verde family members signed their names. However, since 2007, I have been communicating with Dr. Marcello Ferrada de Noli, Med.dr – Ph.D., and I now spell the family name de Noli. Professor Ferrada de Noli has mentioned that in most historical or geographic books, including ancient chronicles or encyclopedia, the navigator is referred to as Antonio de Noli. Professor Ferrada de Noli provided the citation, Charles Francois Du Perier Dumouriez, “An Account of Portugal, as it appeared in 1766 to Demoriez. Printed at Lausanne 1755,” (London: Law, Debret and Balfour, 1797).

⁵ Christiano Jose De Senna Barcellos, Subsidios Para A Historia De Cabo Verde E Guine (Lisboa:Typographia da Academia Real das Ciencias, 1899), passim.

⁶ Antonio Carreira, Cabo Verde Formacao E Extincao De Uma Sociedade Escravocrata, 1460-1878 (Mira-Sintra: Grafica Europam, 1983).

Italian ship-owner Antonio de Noli joined his younger brother and a nephew Raphael de Noli in sailing their three ships from the Mediterranean to Portugal. Each man commanded his own vessel and crew. Upon passing through the Strait of Gibraltar the three-ship flotilla docked in Spain's port for Seville, and stayed there for a few days. In Seville, they probably received information from Genoese merchants about Portugal and its Atlantic trading network with West Africa.

Then the three ships left Seville and sailed west to Portugal, where the family patriarch Antonio de Noli met Prince Henry the Navigator at his base in Sagres, in southern Portugal. The navigator prince hired Antonio de Noli, his ship, and crew to sail to West Africa and deliver horses to Portugal's allies. Antonio de Noli accepted the job and transported the horses from Portugal to the non-Muslim Serer kingdoms, located in modern-day Senegal. He exchanged the horses for Muslim prisoners of war whom the Serers had captured in religious war against the Muslim Wolofs. Upon departing from West Africa and sailing back to Portugal, Antonio de Noli discovered the Cape Verde Islands, located ca.300 kilometers off the coast of Senegal. Over the next decade and half (1462-1476), Antonio de Noli settled the islands, and ruled them as the Portuguese governor. During the fifteenth century, European ship owners sailed for individual European kings, queens, and princes, instead of the national governments of Portugal or Spain. Thus, it was easy for men like Antonio de Noli and Christopher Columbus to work for the Portuguese king Joao II (1481-1495), and then sail for the Catholic king and queen of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella.

Diogo Gomes, a Portuguese ship captain, witnessed the first voyage Antonio de Noli sailed from Portugal to West Africa, and provided details of the discovery of the Cape Verde Islands, 550 years-ago. Gomes sailed from Portugal to West Africa in 1460, at the same time as Antonio de Noli. Gomes first told his travel narrative to the German, Martim Behaim, who recorded it, along with his famous globe. Then, in 1507, the narrative of Diogo Gomes was printed as part of the compendium about maritime voyages from Europe to West Africa compiled by Valentim Fernandes, another German publisher who lived in Lisbon.⁷ Although Diogo Gomes was biased against Antonio de Noli, he was a valuable eyewitness to de Noli's discovery and is taken seriously especially since Antonio de Noli wrote nothing that has survived to the present.

⁷ Antonio Brasio, ed., *O Manuscrito Valentim Fernandes, 1507* (Lisbon: Academia Portuguesa Da Historia, 1940), passim.

Other fifteenth century manuscripts about the Cape Verde Islands are preserved in the Portuguese National Archive, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, in Lisbon, and in the Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, Portugal. Among the oldest surviving manuscripts are two Portuguese royal edicts that name Antonio de Noli. One edict was written in 1462⁸ and the other was issued in 1497 (see the appendix for the 1497 edict). The royal edicts confirmed that Antonio de Noli, a Genoese, discovered the Cape Verde Islands when Prince Henry the Navigator was alive, then settled them, and ruled the islands as a Portuguese governor. Edicts from the kings of Portugal also provide very important data about the first de Noli settlers in the Portuguese Cape Verde colony.

Non-Portuguese fifteenth-century documents also supply valuable information about the de Noli family. Among the most important are printed Spanish royal edicts and Spanish government chronicles, especially for the years 1476-1477. During this period, Spanish troops invaded the Portuguese Cape Verde Islands and captured Governor Antonio de Noli. The Spaniards described their conquest and documented transporting the governor to Spain—as a prisoner of war. The most detailed accounts of Governor de Noli are records of his earliest voyages from Portugal to West Africa and his discovery of the Cape Verde Islands. There is less information about the governor's later maritime expeditions after he colonized the Cape Verde Islands in 1462. This is strange because in fifteenth-century Portuguese maritime historiography there are less data about the earliest voyages.

To show the importance of Spanish documents of de Noli family history, the first Iberian historical manuscript to mention Antonio de Noli in the Atlantic Ocean comes from Spain, and not Portugal. That is because around 1460, when the de Noli ship captains sailed from the Mediterranean to Portugal, they stopped first in Spain. According to the fifteenth century Spanish royal chronicler F. Alonso de Palencia, Antonio de Noli and some of his relatives sailed to Seville from somewhere in the Mediterranean. After a brief stop in Spain, they went on to Portugal.⁹ Spanish records provide no additional details about the original de Noli family, until 1476, when the Spaniards captured Governor Antonio de Noli.

⁸ Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Chancelaria de D. Afonso V, livro I, fol. 61, in Antonio Brasio, Monumenta Missionaria Africana, Africa Occidental, 1342-1499, (Lisboa: Agencia Geral Do Ultramar, 1958), 1: 415-416.

⁹ Palencia, dec. III, bk. 26, chap. 6. Translated into English in John William Blake, Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1560 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1942), 1: 224

However, the data are sufficient enough to establish a sailing route the de Noli fleet.

When he arrived in Portugal around 1460, Antonio de Noli navigated straight to the base Prince Henry the Navigator had established in Sagres. It is likely de Noli had received information about Sagres, the Portuguese, and Prince Henry from Genoese merchants in Seville who traded with Portugal. It is possible that Antonio de Noli transported some Genoese merchants and their cargo from Seville to Portugal. Prince Henry immediately employed Antonio de Noli, his ship, and crew to deliver horses to the Portuguese allies in West Africa because the prince wanted men who would trade with his West African allies and not mariners who would wage war, like the first Portuguese in West Africa. Antonio de Noli was the perfect man, and after the Italian sailed from Portugal to West Africa, his life changed forever.

Prince Henry the Navigator had been directing ships to West Africa and back to Portugal safely for decades before Antonio de Noli anchored in Portugal. Ironically, Prince Henry the Navigator did not sail personally, but remained on land in Sagres.¹⁰ Initially Prince Henry ordered his men to capture and enslave anyone found living along the Atlantic shores stretching from Morocco to the River Gambia (map). West Africans responded to Portuguese raids, by defending themselves and fighting the invaders from the ocean. During the 1440s and 1450s, Africans killed many Portuguese raiders sent by Prince Henry the Navigator to kidnap and enslave coastal dwellers. High casualties forced Prince Henry to devise a new and less dangerous plan to capture Africans whom he then sold as slaves.¹¹ The new Portuguese policy involved trade and employing ship-owning merchants, like Antonio de Noli, his brother Bartholomeu, and their nephew Raphael.

During the 1440s, Prince Henry's mariners finally reached the southern frontiers of Islamic rule in West Africa when they navigated beyond Cape Verde peninsular, in modern-day Senegal (map). Muslims dominated the entire Atlantic littoral from Morocco to south of the Sahara desert in Senegal. The Christian Prince Henry wanted to discover the southern extent of Islamic power in West Africa because he knew Ethiopian Christians lived south of the Islamic world. The Portuguese

¹⁰ Damiao Peres, Historia Descobrimientos Portugueses (Lisboa: Colleeao Henriquina, 1959), 5-65.

¹¹ The best accounts of the first Portuguese maritime voyages to West Africa are found in, Gomes Eannes da Azurara, Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea (London: Hakluyt Society).

wanted to form an alliance with these Christian Ethiopians against Islam. The most southern Muslim state along the Atlantic Ocean in West Africa was that of the Wolofs, in Senegal. Wolof Muslims lived just south of the Sahara, in savanna grasslands stretching along the Atlantic Ocean, from the River Senegal to the Cape Verde peninsular. In previous centuries Wolofs had inhabited the southern provinces of the great Muslim empires of Mali and Songhai.

The first non-Muslims living along the Atlantic were the Serers; they had kingdoms located just south of those of the Muslim Wolofs (map). The boundary between Muslims and non-Muslims corresponded to the boundary between savanna grasslands and coastal rainforest. Serer animists lived in the coastal rainforest, while Wolof Muslims lived in the savanna. The Serer kingdoms were located between the Cape Verde peninsula and the River Gambia. However, Muslim Mandingos dominated the River Gambia which formed the southern boundaries of animist Serer kingdoms. Therefore, Muslims surrounded the Serers on three sides. The Serers had the Atlantic Ocean as their only non-Muslim border.

Although surrounded by hostile Muslims, the Serers survived because their army utilized iron-tipped poison arrows and Serer settlements were protected by trees along the coastal rainforest. Thus, in the 1440s, the Serers welcomed the Christian Portuguese ships that sailed to their Atlantic shores and offered to sell horses and weapons to fight the Muslims. The Portuguese brought textiles and other merchandise, and even took away the captive Muslim prisoners of war. This permitted the victorious Serers to settle on former Wolof territory without occupying or killing the defeated Muslim population.

For centuries before the first Portuguese ships sailed to West Africa, Muslim Wolofs and Mandinga Muslims waged war against animist forest dwellers living along the southern frontiers of the Islamic world. The wars were similar to those waged against Christian Europeans along the borders of the Mediterranean Sea. Muslims can, in theory, coexist peacefully with Christians and Jews, who are classified in the Koran as people of the Book, they cannot coexist with the polytheists who lived in the coastal forests of West Africa.

For many centuries Muslims captured the non-Muslim foresters, including the Serers, and enslaved their prisoners of war. Some Serers were among the animists forced from sub-Saharan Africa across the Sahara desert to Islamic slave markets

in North Africa.¹² South of the Serer kingdoms were dozens of other animist kingdoms in the coastal rain forest along the Atlantic Ocean. The scholar Walter Rodney discovered an absence of indigenous slavery among non-Muslims who lived in the Atlantic coastal rainforest running from the River Gambia south to Liberia.¹³

Prince Henry the Navigator was a medieval crusader who waged war against white Muslims in Europe, brown Muslims in North Africa, and black Muslims in West Africa.¹⁴ When Prince Henry heard about Serers fighting against black Muslims in Senegal, he joined forces with the black Serers against the Muslims. "The enemy of my enemy is my friends," as the saying goes. Prince Henry even secured papal bulls from the Vatican, giving him the right to sell weapons to non-Christian Serers who fought Muslims. The bulls gave Prince Henry permission to buy slaves from non-Christians in West Africa.¹⁵ The Catholic Church claimed that Christian Portuguese could obtain Muslims and animists West Africans, by any means, and then convert them to Christianity. By supplying Serers with horses, Prince Henry gave a lethal cavalry to non-Muslims who had no horses in the past. This influx of horses expanded the wars in sections of West Africa and led to more prisoners of war for the Portuguese to carry back to Europe as slaves. Some Portuguese also traded with Muslims and acquired animist prisoners of war as slaves.

Prince Henry's new policy of diplomacy and trading rather than raiding secured thousands of captive Muslims and animists from West Africa, without kidnapping people, as he had done in the past. The Italian Antonio de Noli was part of this new policy. Prince Henry the Navigator organized the first maritime system to deliver enslaved West Africans to Europe on a steady basis. In this study this

¹² Paul Lovejoy, ed., Slavery on the Frontiers of Islam (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004), 1-54.

¹³ Walter Rodney, History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980), passim.

¹⁴ A. J. Dias Dinis, Estudos Henriquinos (Coimbra: Acra Universitatis Conimbrigensis, 1960), passim.

¹⁵ "By his bull *Romanus pontifex* (1455), Nicholas V (1447-55) reaffirmed his earlier concession to the Portuguese king of the right to reduce the enemies of Christ to perpetual servitude, and allowed him to purchase from infidels through legitimate exchange or by a lawful contract of sale black Africans taken into captivity." Nelson H. Minnich, "The Catholic Church and pastoral care of black Africans in Renaissance Italy," in Black Africans in Renaissance Europe, eds., T.F. Earle, and K.J.P. Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 281.

initial period is called Stage 1 of the human trafficking from West Africa directly to Europe. It will be followed by Stage 2 where Cape Verde colonists monopolized maritime trade with nearby West Africa. Finally, Stage 3 had direct maritime trade from West Africa to the Americas.

Even in the earliest years of Portuguese maritime contacts in West Africa, a few Portuguese and Spanish renegades navigated their small ships from Europe to West Africa, and kidnapped coastal dwellers, and then sold them as slaves in Europe and its Old World insular colonies in Madeira, the Cape Verdes, and the Spanish Canaries.¹⁶ These raids were dangerous, especially after Africans developed warning systems and defenses to stop the kidnappings by European sailors. Despite these raids, early shore-to-ship commerce flourished along the West African coast. In West Africa, Portuguese ships traded in a new unadministered Africa. No one really policed the early maritime trade in West Africa, not the Africans and not the Europeans. Thus, Portuguese colonists in the Cape Verdes sailed where they liked and did as they pleased.

Things became more lawless when Prince Henry the Navigator died in 1460, and the little discipline that had existed disappeared, and chaos ruled European maritime trade from West Africa. At the time of his death, Portuguese voyages to map the West African coast stopped at Sierra Leone. For nine years after he died no new voyages of discovery explored the West Africa coast. It was during the decade of the 1460s, just after Prince Henry died that Antonio de Noli colonized the Cape Verde Islands.

The Italian settled the Cape Verdes without any interference from Portugal. The Cape Verde Islands belonged to the brother of the king, and people left the islands alone because they did not want problems with the royal family. Although the Portuguese royal family owned the Cape Verde colony, they ignored it and left everything in the hands of Governor Antonio de Noli. The Cape Verde Islands was just another royal revenue stream for Prince Ferdinand of Portugal. The early Cape Verde Islands was virtually an independent state, where European colonists had more freedom than people who lived in Europe and were subjected to the conservative Catholic Church and absolute monarchs.

¹⁶ From time to time an unlucky pirate was captured and executed. In 1460 the Spanish interloper De Prado was captured off the Atlantic coast of the River Gambia, and transported to Portugal where he was burned alive, with his gold, for selling weapons to Muslims. De Prado was

Antonio de Noli Sails to West Africa and Discovers the Cape Verde Islands, 1460

As recounted above, around 1460, Prince Henry the Navigator hired Antonio de Noli, and supplied him with horses and cargo that de Noli freighted aboard his ship in southern Portugal, and delivered to the Serer kingdoms in Senegal. According to the eyewitness Diogo Gomes, he and Antonio de Noli navigated from Portugal to West Africa, and anchored in the Serer harbor called Zaya. The harbor was located south of the Cape Verde peninsula in the coastal rainforest along the Atlantic Ocean. Gomes witnessed de Noli exchange one horse for six human captives, with the Serers. Upon seeing this, the sly Portuguese, Diogo Gomes, bartered his captive Africans for de Noli's horses, and at the same rate. Then, Gomes exchanged the horses with other Serers for up to fourteen human captives per horse.¹⁷ This double-dealing led to enmity between de Noli and Gomes.

Portuguese records from the fifteenth and early sixteenth-centuries indicate that the Serer did not have slaves. They were mainly farmers and hunters. Some Historians call them stateless. The early Portuguese said the Serers never sold other Serers into slavery,¹⁸ and also did not hold Muslim as slaves. The Serers lived on the narrow coastal rainforest along the Atlantic Ocean, from the Cape Verde peninsular to the River Gambia. The Serers hid their settlements deep in the forest, away from the Muslims who surrounded them on three-sides. The Muslims were aware of directions, because they had to locate Mecca in order to pray every day. If the Serers had Muslim slaves, then any escaped slave could easily hide in the thick coastal rainforest, and walk to nearby Muslim communities on the Serer border. The escaped Muslim slave could then show other Muslims the location of Serer homes and businesses. Thus, the Serers kept no Muslim slaves for their own safety. Serers banished Muslim prisoners of war to the Portuguese. It is likely that the Serers killed Muslim prisoners of war, or ransomed them for captive Serer

captured in West Africa and transported to Porto, Portugal, where King Afonso V burned him alive. The Voyages of Cadamosto and other Documents on Western Africa in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century, ed., G.R. Crone (London: Hakluyt Society, 1937, 100-102.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 54-55. For a study of the Serers and slavery, see also, Martin A. Klein, "Servitude among the Wolofs and Serers of Senegambia," in Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, eds. Slavery in Africa (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), 339-341.

countrymen, before the Portuguese arrived in the 1440s. It is difficult for kingdoms located in forests to hold slaves in captivity.

Prince Henry received reports about the religious, political, and military situations in Senegal, and exploited them to his advantage. The Portuguese prince formed a military alliance with animist Serers. Prince Henry supplied horses to Serers, and sent military advisors to teach them how to ride the animals and organize cavalries. The soldiers also had to be taught how care for their horses; therefore, some Portuguese men lived in Serer kingdoms from early on. The Portuguese also rounded up Muslim prisoners of war and transported them in ships sailing from West Africa. The Serers had diplomatic relations with Portugal, and sent ambassadors to Portugal in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹⁹ Portugal had diplomatic relations with other West African kingdoms, including Benin City, Nigeria and the Congo kingdom. These kingdoms sent African ambassadors to Portugal.

Prince Henry shifted the balance of military power to the advantage of animist Serers. For the first time, non-Muslim Serer foresters had horses, and they used them to attack Muslim Wolofs, who lived in the savannas, where there were few natural defenses against cavalries. However, the Serer kingdoms had trees and rivers that formed natural defenses against Muslim cavalries. Horses domesticated in the newly colonized Cape Verde Islands became a very valuable export to West Africa. The influx of horses led to the political destabilization in West Africa, especially where incessant wars raged between non-Muslims and Muslims. Wars destroyed life, stifled commerce, halted economic development, and added to insecurity across West Africa, five hundred years ago just like today.

In 1460 Diogo Gomes reported that he and Antonio de Noli loaded captive human beings along the Serer coast and then sailed towards Portugal. Their route took the two ships directly into the Cape Verde archipelago, a group of ten islands spread over 4,000 square kilometers of Atlantic Ocean, and located 300-miles off the coast of Senegal. Because they are so widely spread out the Cape Verde Islands were easy to find, even for fifteenth-century sail ships with questionable navigators and inexperienced pilots. The islands of the Azores, Canaries, and the Cape Verdes

¹⁹ In 1515 the Lisbon based ambassador of the Serer kingdoms, Dom Francisco, received a gift of fine textile from King Manuel I of Portugal. The African ambassador had the Portuguese noble title of Dom, and he took a Christian Portuguese name. Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Corpo Cronologico I-18-70, issued 22 August 1515, in Brasio, Monumenta Missionaria Africana, 2:114.

were strategic because they were spread over vast distances of Atlantic Ocean.²⁰ But ships did get lost, and many fifteenth century European mariners and merchants never returned to land.

Once again, the eyewitness Diogo Gomes provides the best data about the discovery of the Cape Verde Islands—because he was there. Gomes claimed that on their way from West Africa to Portugal he and Antonio de Noli spotted some islands in the ocean, a few days sail from West Africa. They landed on a large island and noted that there were no people on any of the island. Gomes said the birds here could be caught by hand, another indicator the islands were uninhabited.²¹

The first Catholic priests in the islands, only six years after their discovery, also indicated the islands were uninhabited. In 1466, two Franciscan priests landed in Cape Verde's largest island, Santiago. Neither Father Rodrigo nor Father Jaime mentioned converting native people.²² If the islands had an indigenous population, then Catholic priests would have said something about converting them. Also, there was no war between the native population on the islands and the first European settlers.

After exploring the uninhabited islands, Antonio de Noli and Diego Gomes jumped aboard their two ships and raced to Portugal. At that time, Prince Henry the Navigator rewarded ship captains who discovered a new Atlantic island with the governorships of the island. The first person who told Prince Henry about a new island became its governor. Governorships of Portuguese Atlantic islands were lucrative posts.²³ A governorship was hereditary, and it stayed in the discoverer's family for generations. Governors were powerful men who married into the Portuguese nobility. The governor was de facto king of his insular Atlantic colony, located months of sailing time away from Portugal. The governor was also

²⁰ An excellent analysis of the strategic importance of Atlantic islands in the Age of Discovery is given by

T. Bentley Duncan, Atlantic Islands Madeiras, the Azores and the Cape Verdes in the Seventeenth-Century Commerce and Navigation (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1972).

²¹ Crone, Voyages of Cadamosto, 101-102.

²² George Boehrer, "The Franciscan and Portuguese Colonization in Africa and the Atlantic Islands, 1415-1499," The Americas 11 (July 1954-April 1955).

²³ C. R. Boxer, The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825 (London: Knopf, 1969).

the chief legal officer, as well as collector of revenues for the Portuguese crown. Governors owned the most valuable land, rivers, and harbor, and they distributed large holdings of real estate to themselves, family, and friends. Some governors received a handsome salary, a fat pension, and collected taxes although they paid no taxes themselves.

After they discovered the Cape Verde Islands, Antonio de Noli and Diogo Gomes sailed their ships north until they spotted the Canary Islands, and then navigated to the Portuguese Madeira Islands, where a storm halted their voyage to Portugal. In his rush to reach Portugal first, Diego Gomes tried sailing around the storm, and navigated from Madeira towards the Azores, an unwise decision.

The smarter Antonio de Noli waited patiently in Madeira for the storm to pass, and then sailed directly to Portugal. The Italian informed Prince Henry the Navigator about the Cape Verde Islands, and he received the governorship. Antonio de Noli had not yet stolen, but he would steal later. A few months after the Cape Verde discovery, Prince Henry the Navigator died, on 13 November 1460. However, before he died, the prince changed his last will, and included the newly discovered Cape Verde Islands. Prince Henry's last will provide the 1460 date of discovery for the Cape Verde Islands. Still some studies dispute that discovery date and others question if Antonio de Noli was the discoverer.²⁴

One fact is not in dispute; in 1462 a Portuguese royal edict stated that Antonio de Noli discovered the Eastern Cape Verde Islands, during the lifetime of Prince Henry the Navigator.²⁵ This edict was issued only two years after the discovery, and no one has challenged the document. When the king of Portugal, in this case King Afonso V, said Antonio de Noli discovered the Cape Verde Islands, then that is enough proof. However, because archipelagoes are scattered over large sections of the ocean, different islands are usually discovered by different mariners, at different times. Therefore disputes are common.

In 1462 Antonio de Noli founded the first Cape Verde settlement, and there is no dispute here. He loaded his ship with European colonists and supplies, and sailed from Portugal to establish the first settlement in the Cape Verde Islands.

²⁴ Disputes concerning the discovery of the Cape Verde Islands are studied by Oldham H. Yule, "Discovery of Cape Verde Islands," (reprint fr. Richthofen Festschrift, 1895). See also "The Discovery of the Cape Verde Islands," in Crone, The Voyages of Cadamosto, xxxvi-xlii.

²⁵ Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Chancelaria de D. Afonso V, livro 1, fol. 61, edited in Brasio, Monumenta Missionaria Africa, 1: 415-416

Possession is the greater part of ownership, and now the Genoese had possession. Antonio de Noli probably stopped in the Madeira Islands on his way to establish the first Cape Verde settlement, because Madeira is located between Portugal and the Cape Verdes (map). Antonio de Noli had also visited Madeira two years before, and witnessed the development of the once uninhabited archipelago. Portuguese colonists in Madeira had experience settling and developing Atlantic islands. Antonio de Noli's younger brother Bartholomeu de Noli and nephew Raphael de Noli may have sailed on this maiden voyage of colonization, but they are not mentioned as doing so in the historical documents.

Antonio de Noli was smart, and he selected the largest Cape Verde Island for the first settlement. He chose well-watered fertile Santiago Island, and settled at a protected deep water harbor along the southern shores called Ribeira Grande.²⁶ In Portuguese, the words *Ribeira Grande* mean big brook, which described a stream that still supplies year-around fresh water to the settlement. Ribeira Grande has a protected deep water Atlantic harbor, stretching around a narrow green lush river valley. The settlement gained the reputation for being unhealthy, and the capital was moved to nearby Praia, the present capital city of the Republic of Cape Verde.

In 1462 when they settled Ribeira Grande, all ten Cape Verde Islands were desolate, and in order to make money the first European colonists had to sail to West Africa to trade, because Africans were not sailing to them. The first Cape Verde colonists also traded with Europe and other Atlantic islands in the Azores, Madeira and Spanish Canaries. European colonists in the Cape Verdes made their money by sailing their ships to nearby West Africa, and securing food, ivory, beeswax, gold, pepper, and captive Africans. Then they transported the merchandise and captive human beings to the Cape Verdes. Africans enslaved in the Cape Verdes grew cotton, vegetables, sugar cane, and food, and raised livestock. European colonists shipped valuable horses from the Cape Verde Islands to West Africa, and exchanged the animals for prisoners of war whom they transported to the Cape Verdes as slaves.

The first colonists in the Cape Verde Islands had a surplus of enslaved Africans. Once merchants in Europe knew enslaved Africans were available in the Cape Verde Islands, they sailed to the tropical islands to buy them. Ships navigated to the Cape Verde Islands from Europe and its insular colonies in Madeira, Azores,

²⁶ There are no data on Antonio de Noli colonizing the Cape Verdes in 1462, until 1466 when the founding charter said the Cape Verde Islands was settled 4-years before. See Founding Charter of 1466 in English in note 27.

and the Spanish Canaries. Merchants in Cape Verde markets and harbors sold enslaved Africans, island grown cotton, sugar, hides, ivory and beeswax to European merchants. Ships had to carry a lot of food to feed their human cargo on the two-month-plus sail from the Cape Verdes to Europe. It is likely that merchants traded gold, pepper, and live exotic African animals, extra-legally. Cape Verde merchants imported European goods, especially textiles, and food including wheat, olive oil, wine, cheeses, and liquor. Other imports from Europe included building equipment, supplies for horses, household goods, and supplies to repair ships. Europeans living in the Cape Verde Islands tried to enjoy their Mediterranean diet of wheat, wines, olive oil, cheeses and fresh fish. Enslaved Africans ate food imported into the islands from West Africa.

The Cape Verde Islands had natural resources, including salt, dyes, wood, fresh water, and wild cotton. Initially, the land was rich and fertile. The first farmers grew food to eat and had a surplus to supply ships with human cargo. Some islands had freshwater streams cutting through fertile lush valleys, like Ribeira Grande, Santiago Island. Many islands had shores, natural harbors, bays and rivers, with fish and other seafood. Colonists also bred horses, goats, pigs and cattle. They used local lumber and stones to built homes, markets, customs houses, storage facilities, bars, rooming houses, and dens of entertainment for sailors, local colonists and anxious traders. The Cape Verde Islands became the first tropical “resort” where European sailors and merchants could rent enslaved African women, girls, men and boys for their pleasures.

The first European colonists in the Cape Verdes wrote very little about their settlements because they did not want others to know about the topical society they had created off the West African coast. However, some written documents have survived from the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries until today, and they paint “official” word-pictures of early the Cape Verde colony. Since it was a Portuguese colony, documents were written in Portuguese. They began with kings of Portugal issuing edicts about Cape Verde Islands. The oldest surviving royal edicts are stored in the Portuguese National Archive, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, in Lisbon.

One of the oldest manuscripts is the Cape Verde Founding Charter dated 1466.²⁷ The charter provides the most data about early Cape Verde Islands. In the founding charter, King Afonso V, granted Cape Verde colonists the perpetual

²⁷ The Cape Verde Founding Charter of 1466 is found in English in John W. Blake, trans. and ed., Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1560 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1942), 1:64-67.

right to trade with nearby West Africa—without securing a license from the king of Portugal. All non Cape Verde colonists had to get Portuguese royal permits to trade in West Africa, and royal permits were difficult to secure. The charter linked the Cape Verde Islands to West Africa. The charter mentioned that the colonists were already importing enslaved Africans.

The Cape Verde Founding Charter also permitted colonists to ship merchandise to West Africa without paying taxes. Non-Portuguese Europeans and a few Africans were also welcomed to settle in the insular tropical Portuguese colony, and the foreigners enjoyed the rights of residents. There were a few free Africans, but most Africans were enslaved by the European colonists.

By the early sixteenth century the Cape Verde capital town of Ribeira Grande had foreign merchants from Genoa, Florence, Noli, Spain, Greece, Turk or the Middle Eastern, Russian, the Low Countries, the Azores, and the Spanish Canaries.²⁸ Smart Cape Verde colonists made money importing textiles, wines, cheeses, glass, and metals from Europe, and then shipping them to West Africa, tax free. Initially, Cape Verde colonists also paid no taxes on trade with Portugal and its other insular colonies.

The first Cape Verde colonists paid taxes to the Portuguese government, a 25 percent tax on imports of human captives and merchandise from West Africa. Starting during the early 1500s, the Catholic Church in the Cape Verdes collected a 5 percent import tax on enslaved Africans and cargo imported from West Africa. During the sixteenth century the Portuguese government also charged a 10 percent duty on Cape Verde imports and exports with Portugal, its colonies in Madeira and the Azores, and Spain and the Spanish Canaries. Merchants who transported captive Africans to Spain and its Atlantic colonies had to pay another tax to Spain.

Cape Verde colonists became wealthy because the tiny islands traded with an immense region of West Africa, stretching from River Senegal to Sierra Leone (map). Surviving customs records for 1513-1516 and 1528 gives an estimate of the legal commerce. Customs officers based on Santiago Island recorded the name of over 1,000 Cape Verde colonists who sailed to West Africa, where the men transported over 4,400 captives, as slaves from West Africans to the Cape Verde

²⁸ Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Nucleo Antigo, livro 757.

Islands.²⁹ This level of human trafficking was normal in the early sixteenth century, and it increased over the next generations. The Cape Verde Islands was the major supplier of enslaved Africans to Europe and its Old World colonies, before, during and after Christopher Columbus sailed to the Americas.

During the early sixteenth century, the Cape Verde colony shipped many of the first enslaved Africans to the Spanish Caribbean. Much of this nascent transatlantic commerce went unrecorded in Cape Verde records. Widespread smuggling dominated early maritime trade from the Cape Verde Islands to the Spanish Caribbean.³⁰ The onset of smuggling may be traced to the beginning of colonization in the 1460s, when the government of Portugal tried to increase the number of ships trading with the distant tropical islands. In order to increase commerce, the founding charter ordered all Portuguese vessels that traded in West Africa to navigate to the Cape Verde Islands and pay taxes there before returning to Portugal. This decision led to smuggling, when pilots missed the islands and avoided paying taxes. At that time, only Portuguese ships trade legally on the West African mainland. However, smugglers simply sailed from European waters to the rich and unsupervised waters off the Cape Verde Islands and West Africa. While very few smugglers were caught, a few were arrested, tortured, and burnt alive for selling weapons to Muslims in West Africa.³¹

Cape Verde colonists received a founding charter filled with generous tax concessions because the brother of the king of Portugal owned the islands. Initially, Prince Henry the Navigator owned the Cape Verde Islands because he had employed Antonio de Noli, who discovered them. When Prince Henry died in 1460, leaving no children, he bequeathed the Cape Verdes to his grandnephew, Prince Ferdinand, brother of the king. During the first four years of settlement, after 1462, the islands made no profit for Prince Ferdinand; they may have cost

²⁹ Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Nucleo Antigo, livro 757, the years 1513-1516; Ibid., livro 528, the year 1528. These customs receipt books were written by customs agents who collected import taxes from Cape Verde colonists who traded in West Africa, and returned to the Cape Verde colony.

³⁰ In 1514 King Manuel I of Portugal issued Laws Regulating Trade with Guine (West Africa). He stated that Cape Verde colonists were trading illegally with the Spanish Indies. Ordenacoes Manuelians, livro v, edicao 1797 (Lisboa: Fundacao Calouste Gulbenkian, 1984), 343-346.

³¹ In 1460 Diego Gomes claimed that while in West Africa, he ordered Goncalo Ferriera to capture the ship of the Spanish interloper, De Prado, who traded armaments with Muslims. The Portuguese captured De Prado and King Afonso V of Portugal ordered him burnt alive with his gold. See, "A Castilian Interloper in Guinea, c.1460," in Blake, Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1560, 1: 203.

him money. However, the prince knew the islands had potential, and asked his brother for help. The king of Portugal, Afonso V, granted Cape Verde colonists a founding charter that attracted ship-owning settlers and increased maritime traffic with the isolated Atlantic archipelago. The Cape Verde Founding Charter included generous tax-breaks and a wide franchise, where colonists paid little taxes and did what they wanted to make money, and then answered to no one. Laissez faire capitalism began outside of Europe in the unregulated insular Portuguese colonies off West Africa in the fifteenth century. Kings in Europe and the Catholic Church had rules and regulations against capitalism.

In 1466 when the king of Portugal issued the founding charter, the Cape Verde Islands was not a very strategic location; in reality, it was the most remote European colonial settlement in the Atlantic. Mariners from Europe had not yet sailed to the Gold Coast in West Africa and Sao Tome Island (1471), or the Americas (1492) or India (1498). The first Cape Verde colonists lived almost three months round-trip-sailing time to Portugal. Yet, later on, Cape Verde would be located only one month sailing time to Barbados or Brazil. The Cape Verde Islands became prosperous, for Europeans, in the fifteenth century thanks to the founding charter, peace, and European colonists who organized and operated maritime trade with Europe, West Africa, and other Atlantic islands.

The founding charter of 1466 confirmed that the first Cape Verde settlers landed four years before the charter or in 1462. The document does not name any governor nor identify any colonists. But the charter gave the first Cape Verde governor the right to collect taxes for the Portuguese royal family. The governor stored royal revenues at Ribeira Grande, the first settlement on Santiago Island, and then the royal family sent a ship from Portugal to collect the duties. Ships were the only means of transportation and communication with the Cape Verdes during the first centuries of occupation. Therefore ship owners, like the de Noli clan, enjoyed a monopoly over maritime transportation and communication from the Cape Verde Islands to the rest of the world.

A second surviving document, also dated 1466, identified Governor Antonio de Noli as having left the Cape Verde colony that year. The governor named his younger brother, Bartholomeu de Noli, as acting-governor.³² The Catholic Church record does not say where Governor Antonio de Noli went or when he would return. This lack of data on the governor's maritime voyages into the Atlantic in

³² Licenciado George Cardoso, Agioio Lvsitano Dos Santos E Vareons Ilvstres Em Virtvde Do Reino De Portugal, E Svas Conqvistas, 1652 (Lisboa: Livraria d'Alcobaca).

1466 was not unusual for Cape Verde islanders wrote so little. What is clear is that in 1466 Antonio de Noli was governor, and he continued to sail the Atlantic after he settled at Ribeira Grande. Not much more is known about Governor Antonio de Noli during his first decade in office (1462-1472).

His second decade began differently in 1472, when Governor de Noli sailed from the Cape Verde Islands to the Portuguese Madeira Islands, and then navigated south to trade illegally on the Gold Coast, in modern-day Ghana. This long Atlantic trading adventure confirmed Governor de Noli was an exceptional ship captain and navigator (map). He mastered winds and currents in the Atlantic that ran between Europe and West Africa, north of the equator. The governor paid close attention to Portuguese maritime explorers of his day, especially to pilots who were mapping the West African coast. From 1469 to 1471 the Portuguese mapped the coast from Sierra Leone to the Gold Coast (map). The Portuguese had sailed to the equator in 1471, and just one year later Governor de Noli was trading there, in his own ship.

It makes sense that Governor de Noli learned about the Gold Coast soon after the first Portuguese ships sailed there. The first ship on the Gold Coast belonged to Fernao Gomes, a rich Lisbon based businessman. Upon departing from the Gold Coast and returning to Portugal, the pilot navigated close to the West African littoral of Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Senegal. Then, in Senegal or maybe Sierra Leone the vessel sailed west into the Atlantic, towards the Cape Verde Islands. Then, it navigated north towards Portugal, possibly sailing through the Azores.

The voyage from the Gold Coast to Portugal was determined by Atlantic winds and currents in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is very likely that the first Portuguese ship on the Gold Coast in 1471 stopped in the Cape Verde Islands or along the West African coast, on the return voyage to Europe. The crew told of a coast of gold, where they traded goods of little value for gold. Years later many sailors deserted Portuguese ships in Cape Verde Islands and along the nearby West African coast. One such sailor may have showed Governor de Noli the way to the Gold Coast, for a high price.

The information about the Gold Coast expedition of Governor de Noli comes from a lawsuit filed in Portugal in 1472, by the Portuguese businessman, Fernao Gomes. Gomes accused the un-named Cape Verde governor of sailing his own ship from the Cape Verde Islands, to the Madeira Islands to buy supplies, and then trading illegally on the Gold Coast—of modern-day Ghana. Antonio de Noli was

definitely that un-named Cape Verde governor, because he was the only known Cape Verde governor at that time. It is strange that Governor de Noli was not identified by his name, but only by his title.

Back in 1469, the plaintiff Fernao Gomes purchased a license from the Portuguese government giving him a monopoly over all maritime trade in West Africa, south of Sierra Leone. Gomes had to map the West African coastline south of Sierra Leone, where Prince Henry the Navigator had stopped when he died in 1460. From 1469 to 1471, Gomes's ships mapped the African littoral from Sierra Leone to Liberia, Ivory Coast, the Gold Coast, and modern-day Nigeria and Cameroon. They also reached the equator. Then, in 1472 Fernao Gomes accused the Cape Verde governor of violating the 1469 license by trading along the Gold Coast.

The king of Portugal, Afonso V agreed with Gomes and ruled against the Cape Verde governor. His ruling is dated 1472 and appears in the form of a royal edict. The document did not name the Cape Verde governor by name. The edict prohibited Cape Verde colonists from trading on the Gold Coast. It also prohibited Cape Verde colonists from sending their ships and trading south of Sierra Leone. In addition, the king ordered Cape Verde colonists to ship to West Africa only goods grown or produced on the islands. This would stop colonists from importing merchandise from Europe, Azores, Madeira and the Canaries, and shipping it, tax-free, to West Africa. The king told Cape Verde Islanders that they could only bring enslaved Africans to the islands for personal use, and not for export to Europe or other islands.³³ These restrictions would have crippled the nascent but flourishing Cape Verde economy.

The king of Portugal made his money by leasing sections along the West African coast to private contractors, and he did not want Cape Verde colonists to interfere with the leases. This is clear in the lease to Fernao Gomes, and the royal edict of 1472 protecting Gomes from Antonio de Noli. There was one small problem with the king of Portugal leasing West Africa to private merchants; however, Portugal had not conquered West Africa. Thus, private Portuguese businessmen interacted with the West Africans living along the mainland facing the Cape Verde Islands. Africans did not deal with the government of Portugal, but with men who wanted to make money by selling merchandise and human beings as slaves.

³³ Antonio Carreira, Cabo Verde, Formacao E Extincao De Uma Sociedade Escravocrata, 1460-1878 (Mira-Sintra: Grafica Europam, 1983), 31-39.

Cape Verde colonists simply ignored the Portuguese royal edict that restricted their maritime trade to designated sections of West Africa. The colonists looked at the 1472 royal edicts as violating their 1466 founding charter which permitted trading with all of West Africa, except Arguim Island in Mauritania. The founding charter had been issued just six years before, by the same king, Afonso V. In reality, Cape Verde colonists sailed where they wanted to traded where they desired, and sold enslaved Africans where it was most profitable. Laws issued in Portugal had no influence in the early Cape Verde colony.

The Portuguese king did nothing to enforce his royal edict on Cape Verde colonists, because the king's brother owned the islands. Portugal exercised little power over its first Cape Verde colonists, and less power over European ships sailing Atlantic waters around the Cape Verde Islands and West Africa. Initially, if the king of Portugal had sent a few troops to the tiny Cape Verde settlement, then he could have easily enforced his royal edict. The Portuguese could have also sent a few war ships to patrol Cape Verdean and West African waters. Just a few vessels with cannons would have received respect from un-armed Cape Verde merchant ships, and smugglers. During the fifteenth century, Cape Verde settlements consisted of only a few hundred Europeans who had no power to resist Portuguese navy ships and a few armed soldiers.

The Cape Verde Islands and the adjacent West African littoral stretching from River Senegal to Liberia were initially a lawless un-administered maritime triangle dominated by ships from the Cape Verde Islands. The colonists were enjoying their founding charter to trade with West Africa. By 1500, mulatto children of the first Portuguese men who lived in West Africa began to participate in shore-to-ship commerce from West Africa to the Cape Verde Islands.

Mulattos with African mothers enjoyed citizenship in many non-Muslim matrilineal West African cultures. The mulattos exercised political and economic power over maritime trade between the Cape Verde Islands and West Africa because they were perfect intermediaries with their white European fathers and black African mothers.

A mulatto class also emerged in the early Cape Verde Islands where very few European women lived among many European men. Although it is documented in no known written manuscripts, European men had intimate relationships with African women. This can be seen in a mulatto population that emerged in early Cape Verde society. Just like West Africa, the Cape Verde mulatto class had Portuguese fathers and African mothers. However, in Portuguese culture, children

inherited the lineage of their Portuguese fathers. Mulattos in the Cape Verde Islands saw themselves as superior to Africans. However, mulatta women were considered the most beautiful women in the Cape Verde Islands where they were more desirous than European or African women.

Then in 1476, after making a lot of money, Governor Antonio de Noli's world came crashing down, when Spanish troops invaded the Portuguese Cape Verde Islands and captured him in his fine house in Ribeira Grande. During all his adventures, Antonio de Noli wrote nothing that has survived. No portrait of Governor Antonio de Noli is known to have ever existed, but there is written information about the man and his family in archives across Iberia.

Governor Antonio de Noli: Captured by Spanish Troops and Prisoner in Spain, 1476

The most detailed records of Antonio de Noli, the man, come from the Spaniards when they captured him from the Portuguese Cape Verde Islands in 1476 and transported him to Spain as a prisoner of war. The Portuguese wrote so little, and the Spaniards wrote a lot, often in triplicate. In 1475 Portugal and Spain went to war, again. Although the Iberian neighbors are both Christians, there was no love lost between the two countries. This is true even today. However, things were different in the fifteenth century between colonists of Portugal in Cape Verde Islands, and Spanish colonists in the Canary Islands. The islanders traded and evaded paying taxes to Iberian monarchs and the Catholic Church.

As early as 1469 the Portuguese king permitted Spaniards to trade with the Cape Verde Islands in order to boost the colony's economy, and benefit Prince Ferdinand, who owned the islands. On 30 September 1469 the Portuguese royal family signed a contract with two Spanish merchants, Joao de Lugo and Pedro de Lugo, permitting them to trade in the Cape Verde Islands. At this time the most valuable Cape Verde exports were horses and enslaved Africans—and the Spaniards did not buy horses. The Spaniards agreed to pay Portuguese customs duties on their imports and exports.³⁴ Maritime trade flourished among the Cape Verde Islands, Spain and its Canary Island colony from 1469 into the 1470s. During the fifteenth century, Spanish merchants in Seville, Valencia and the Canary Islands purchased thousands of captive Africans in the Cape Verde

³⁴ The 1469 royal edict with the two Spanish merchants has been translated into English in, Blake, Europeans in West Africa, 1: 203-205.

Islands, along with raw cotton, hides and ivory from West Africa.³⁵ There is little mention of gold in Cape Verde trade records, but the precious metal was traded.

Most maritime commerce between the Cape Verde Islands and the Spanish world went unrecorded in fifteenth-and-sixteenth-century Cape Verde and Portuguese records. Documentation of the trade comes mostly from Spanish records. The Cape Verde Islands provided Spain and its colonists in the Canary Islands with a legal Portuguese territory where Spaniards could buy enslaved Africans, and secure African merchandise, without sailing illegally to West Africa. Although the trade began in the fifteenth century data only emerge on the Cape Verde Islands in early sixteenth century. Cape Verde customs records from 1513-1516 show the Portuguese overcharged Spaniards and sold them enslaved West Africans for the highest price.³⁶ According to the Cape Verde colony's customs records from 1513 to 1516, ships from Spain and the Canary Islands purchased some six hundred enslaved Africans in the Cape Verde Islands, and that was only the legal commerce.³⁷

During peaceful times, maritime commerce flourished among the Cape Verde Islands, Europe, West Africa, and Iberian insular colonies. Then in 1475, Portugal and Spain went to war, and the fighting spread from Europe to the Portuguese Cape Verde colony and along the West African coast. War was bad for business, except for merchants selling armaments, ships, and horses, and supplying soldiers. The Spaniards knew the Cape Verde Islands were rich, because they traded there, legally, for years, and they wanted some of the gold.

In 1476 a Spanish fleet invaded the Portuguese Cape Verde Islands. The Spaniards attacked the unfortified Santiago Island and captured the capital, Ribeira Grande, meeting no resistance. They looted the town, and forced the terrified population to flee with the clothes on their backs, and a few valuable possessions under their arms or on backs of horses, mules, donkeys, and enslaved Africans. During the fog of war, some enslaved Africans escaped, as they did in future invasions of islands

³⁵ Between 1489 and 1497 the Florentine merchant Cesare de Barchi sold over 2,000 enslaved Wolofs whom his men transported from the Cape Verde Islands to Valencia, Spain. See Jacques Heers, Escravos E Servidao Domestica Na Idade Media (Lisboa: Publicacoes Dom Quixote, 1983), 138-139.

³⁶ Customs records from the three customs houses in Santiago Island for 1513-1516 show the most expensive enslaved Africans appraised by Cape Verde customs officers were sold to Spaniard, see Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Nucleo Antigo, livro 757.

³⁷ Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Nucleo Antigo, livro 757, dates 1513-1516.

on both sides of the Atlantic. Enslaved Africans, Maroons, European convicts, and European indentured servants prayed for a foreign invasion, because it brought freedom.

The Spaniards invaded Ribeira Grande in 1476, captured Governor Antonio de Noli, and took him to Spain as a prisoner of war. The governor probably saw himself as an Italian caught in the middle of an Iberian war—this was not his fight—but he was wrong. It is not known why Governor de Noli did not flee inland to avoid the Spanish troops which are what other Cape Verde colonists did. There is no information about the governor's ship, his family or his gold. Governor de Noli was very confident in his abilities, and probably thought he could talk or buy his way out of Spanish captivity but he was wrong. Governor de Noli saw Spanish forces loot his fine home in Ribeira Grande and pillage the small town he founded.

The Spanish invaders did not pursue fleeing Portuguese colonists over the steep hills and down deep valleys of Santiago Island. The Spaniards also did not attack any of the other Cape Verde islands, other than Santiago. Spain kept control of the Cape Verde Island for only a few months, before withdrawing its troops prior to an expected Portuguese counterattack.

Before departing the Cape Verde colony, Spanish troops took 300³⁸ enslaved Africans whom Portuguese and other European colonists held in bondage in Ribeira Grande. This is the first historical evidence of large-scale enslavement of West Africans in the Cape Verde Islands—and the information comes from the Spaniards in 1476.

A decade earlier in 1466, the founding charter mentioned Cape Verde islanders importing enslaved Africans, and the 1469 contract with Spanish merchants probably involved enslaved Africans. However, early Portuguese colonists wrote little about themselves and less about the Africans they held in captivity. The enslaved Africans worked Cape Verde cotton and sugar fields, as well as grew food, and performed domestic laborer.

Enslaved African women were forced to be sex slaves to European men, and were mothers of a mulatto majority in the early Cape Verdes. It is possible that enslaved Africans comprised a majority of the population of Santiago Island as early as the

³⁸ Mosen Diego de Valera, *Cronica de los Reys Catolicos* (de., Juan de M.Carriazo, 1927), ch. 22, p. 82, in Blake, *Europeans in West Africa*, 1: 217-218.

1470s. Africans were the majority in the Cape Verde Islands back in 1460, when Antonio de Noli and Diego Gomes discovered the islands because their two ships had more enslaved Africans onboard than European officers, crew, and merchants.

In 1476 victorious Spaniards transported the defeated Governor Antonio de Noli from Cape Verde Islands to Spain and held him as a prisoner of war. The Portuguese government did not do anything to free Governor de Noli from Spanish prison in 1476 and 1477. The governor had to find his own ticket to freedom. Portugal was fighting to keep from becoming a Spanish province, and had no time for one Italian prisoner of war. At first, Spanish captors tried to ransom Governor de Noli to rich Genoese businessmen in Seville for 1,000 doublos in gold but the plan failed.³⁹

Rich Genoese businessmen had influence and power in Spain's royal courts. The Catholic kings borrowed money from Genoese merchants to finance wars, balance budgets and pay for capital projects including roads, canals, and the Spanish army and navy. The monarchs of Spain listened to rich Genoese businessmen before they heard their own subjects who held Governor de Noli captive. Money was more important than nationality to the Catholic kings who were still battling Muslims in southern Spain.

On 6 June 1477 King Ferdinand of Spain freed the Genoese Antonio de Noli by royal edict. According to the Spanish document, Antonio de Noli promised to govern the Portuguese Cape Verde Islands as a Spanish colony, and the decree warned Spaniards not to attack the Cape Verde Islands again.⁴⁰ At the time when he negotiated his freedom from Spain, Governor de Noli probably thought Spain retained military control of the Cape Verde Islands, but he was wrong. War between Portugal and Spain continued through 1477 and 1478 and ended in 1479 with the Treaty of Alcáçovas. The protocol gave the Cape Verde Islands back to Portugal, and Governor de Noli lost the islands he had discovered, colonized and governed. In 1477, the Cape Verde governor joined his brother, the murderer Bartholomeu de Noli, as a wanted man in Portugal and its colonies.

³⁹ Epistolas de Mosen Diego de Valera (1878) pp.70-74 in Blake, *Ibid.*, 1: 219-220.

⁴⁰ The entire Spanish royal edict is translated into English in Charles Verlinden, The Beginnings of Modern Colonization, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), 176-177.

The fifteenth-century Spanish chronicle, *Monsen Diego de Valera* recorded that King Ferdinand of Spain freed Governor Antonio de Noli while the monarch was in Medina del Campo, Spain. Governor de Noli went to thank the Spanish king personally, but no records confirm any meeting between the king and de Noli. Spanish records show the king authorized his government to give Governor de Noli proper clothing, a horse, and probably some money for expenses. After that, Antonio de Noli is said to have ridden his horse from Spain to Portugal.⁴¹ He vanished during the overland ride!

Disappearing saved his life. It would have been suicide for Governor de Noli to go to Portugal in 1477, and although he had made mistakes, he was not a fool. In 1477 Governor de Noli had many reasons to avoid Portugal and its colonies. First, Spain and Portugal were in the middle of a bloody war on land and sea, and Iberia and its waters were dangerous. Second, Governor de Noli had just betrayed Portugal, when he agreed to rule the Portuguese Cape Verde Islands as a Spanish colony—in exchange for his freedom. Third, many Portuguese would have tortured and executed Antonio de Noli as a traitor. But if Governor de Noli did not ride that horse from Spain to Portugal in the summer of 1477, then where did he go? That remains a major de Noli family secret.

Portuguese written records were largely silent about Antonio de Noli even when he governed its Cape Verde colony from 1462 to 1476, and not much was written after the governor vanished in 1477. The Portuguese rarely mentioned Governor Antonio de Noli by name, even when he was alive. There are two exceptions: the first is the royal edict of 1462 which identifies Antonio de Noli as discovering the Cape Verde Islands, while Prince Henry the Navigator lived. A second royal edict in 1497 named Antonio de Noli as discoverer, first colonizer and governor of the Cape Verde Islands. But in the lawsuit of 1472, the Cape Verde governor is not identified by his name, when he was clearly the defendant in the litigation. Then again in 1481, King Joao II of Portugal issued an edict against the Cape Verde governor, but did not name Antonio de Noli.

Not surprisingly, the Portuguese documents said nothing about Governor de Noli when he was captured by Spain in 1476. The Portuguese remained silent about the governor during the entire next decade, the 1480s. King Joao II ruled Portugal from 1481 to 1495, and he never mentioned the name Antonio de Noli. Only after he died in 1495 did his successor, Manuel I (1495-1521) mention Governor Antonio

⁴¹ Diego de Valera, *Cronica de los Reyes Catolicos*, 217-218.

de Noli, in 1497. The Portuguese records are also silent about members of the de Noli family who returned to Italy from Portugal and the Cape Verde Islands. However, Italian archival records mention a Simone of Antonio de Noli “Bondi,” who went to Cesena, Italy, around 1480-1490, from abroad with a fortune in gold. Simone was a son of Governor de Noli or maybe, the child of his brother Bartholomeu or nephew Raphael de Noli.⁴² It is possible the Portuguese went back through their official documents, and attempted to erase the names Antonio de Noli and members of his family the Cape Verde Islands—but why?

An answer to the mystery may be found with King Joao II, the Portuguese master spy who also controlled the Cape Verde Islands. In 1471 Prince Joao, the future King Joao II, received control and rent from Portuguese colonies in West Africa, including the Cape Verde Islands. The prince collected his royal revenues, including rental fees from Fernao Gomes for the Gold Coast, but he did nothing about running the colonies.⁴³ The prince had to have known what Governor Antonio de Noli was doing, especially in 1477, when de Noli betrayed Portugal in the middle of war against Spain. Only one month after becoming king of Portugal in 1481, King Joao II issued an edict against Governor Antonio de Noli, dated 30 September 1481—without naming the Cape Verde governor by name. In the edict, King Joao II sent Pedro Lourenco from Portugal to investigate the Cape Verde colony, and gave him the special judicial power to arrest any Cape Verde governors who returned to the islands.⁴⁴ That was a warning to Governor Antonio de Noli and his brother, the murderer and former acting-governor, Bartholomeu de Noli. The edict may have been directed specifically against Bartholomeu de Noli for his murder of a Catholic priest in Ribeira Grande in 1466. The Catholic Church had many powerful friends in fifteenth-century Portugal.

⁴² I thank Professor Emeritus Marcello Ferrada de Noli, M.D., Ph.D., for bringing my attention to this finding, see Prof. Marcello Ferrada de Noli, Dr. Caral Rosetti and Dr. Carla Brigati, “Returning to Italy. Historical and genealogical research on Antonio de Noli’s family descendants in Cesena and Genoa, 1497,” *Bulletin of Antonio de Noli Academic Society*, vol. 1, no.4 (available on-line). See also *Grande Enciclopedia Portuguesa e Brasileira* (ed., 1945), vol. xviii, p. 386.

⁴³ The royal chronicle of Damiao De Gois looks at Prince Joao only as a prince, before 1481 when he became King Joao II. Damiao De Gois, *Cronica Do Principe D. Joao, 1567*, ed., Graca Almeida Rodrigues (Lisboa: Universidade Nova De Lisboa, 1977), 78-79.

⁴⁴ This was one of King Joao II’s first edicts. It was issued at Montemor o Novo, and recorded by royal scribe Christovao Bairros. Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Chancelaria de D. Affonso V, Livro 26, fol. 140v in Barcellos, *Subsidios Para A Historia De Dabo Verde E Guine*, 1: 40-42.

After Governor de Noli vanished from Spain, the Portuguese kept his Cape Verde governorship vacant for twenty years (1477-1497). The decision was made by King Joao II as a monarch and before that, as a prince. This was unusual because fifteenth century Portuguese kings appointed new governors to fill other vacant Cape Verde governorships. For example, in 1473, Rodrigo Afonso received the governorship of Alcatrazes, the northern half of Santiago Island, from Diego Afonso.⁴⁵ As king of Portugal, Joao II used the Cape Verde Islands as one of his secret maritime base in West Africa, from where he launched voyages of discovery to map wind and ocean currents in the South Atlantic. The information comes from Christopher Columbus. In 1498 on his third voyage from Europe to America, Columbus sailed to the Cape Verde Islands and reported that some colonists in Ribeira Grande told him that the King Joao II of Portugal sent ships into the ocean south-west of the Cape Verde Islands.⁴⁶

Something strange was going on between the de Noli family, the Cape Verde Islands and Portuguese kings in the fifteenth century. King Joao II is known to have expunged sections of the official Portuguese royal archives in order to hide state secrets, and he may have had his reasons to erase mention of Governor Antonio de Noli and the Cape Verde Islands.⁴⁷ It is not known if King Joao II met Governor Antonio de Noli, but both men were adults in the decades of the 1470s and 1480s. Each man had a keen interest in the Cape Verde Islands and maritime exploration of the mid-Atlantic Ocean. Some Portuguese and Spaniards claim Christopher Columbus and other Italians spied for King Joao II of Portugal.⁴⁸ Others claim Joao II used the Cape Verde Islands as a secret naval base to map the

⁴⁵ Luis De Albuquerque and Maria Emilia Madeira Santos, eds., Historia Geral De Cabo Verde (Lisboa: Instituto De Investigacao Cientificas Tropical, 1991), 50.

⁴⁶ Samuel Eliot Morison, Admiral of the Ocean Sea, A Life of Christopher Columbus (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1983), 519-521.

⁴⁷ The Portuguese scholar Braamcamp Freire published surviving archival documents from the reign of King Joao II (1481-1495), and reported that all the documents for 1485 are missing, and the last document is dated 11 December 1492, and the king died in 1495, and all documents are missing for 1493, 1494 and 1495. Armando Cortesao, The Mystery of Vasco da Gama (Coimbra: Agrupamento De Estudos de Cartografia Antiga), 175.

⁴⁸ Mascarenhas Barreto, O Portugues Cristovao Colombo, Agente Secreto Do Rei Dom Joao II (Lisboa: Edicoes Referendo, 1988). Barreto claims that Columbus was a secret agent spying for Joao II king of Portugal.

Brazil and the South Atlantic after Bartholomeu Dias returned to Portugal from South Africa, in 1488.⁴⁹

It is clear the Portuguese conducted undocumented maritime expeditions into the South Atlantic in preparation for the voyage Vasco da Gama sailed from Portugal to India in 1497 and back in 1499. The Portuguese had to find two direct round-trip shipping lanes from Cape Verde Islands to South Africa and back. Sometimes, scholars forget they also had to discover a direct maritime route from South Africa back to the Cape Verde Islands, even before they embarked for India. In 1497 Vasco da Gama stopped in the Cape Verde Islands on his way to India, and sailed from Santiago Island directly to South Africa. On his way home from India, da Gama sailed from South Africa to Cape Verde Islands. The Portuguese knew where they were going and how to get there, as proven by the three year voyage to India and back—without losing a ship.

Before 1492, the Cape Verde Islands were the closest Old World European settlement to the Americas. The Cape Verde Islands is close to Barbados in the Caribbean. The strategic maritime location of the Cape Verde Islands along the shipping lanes to the Americas and India, transformed the islands and its governor into a central actors in the secret Portuguese search for India at the end of the fifteenth century.

Cape Verde Governorship Inherited by Noblewoman, Dona Branca de Aguiar: Daughter of Governor Antonio de Noli, 1497

King Joao II ruled from 1481 to 1495 without ever writing the name Antonio de Noli, and then just two years after he died the new Portuguese king, Manuel I (1495-1521) confirmed Antonio de Noli was the discoverer and first settler of the Cape Verde Islands. Even more important, the royal edict of 1497 said Governor Antonio de Noli had a daughter (Appendix, 1497 royal edict). The daughter was a Portuguese noblewoman named Dona Branca de Aguiar. No other sources mention the governor as having any children. Yet, the royal edict did not name the mother of Dona Branca de Aguiar, nor did it say if Governor de Noli was married or single, or dead or alive. Once again, this is not normal in Portuguese archival records. Usually, when a child received the governorship, the governor is identified as dead or having renounced his governorship—but not in this case.

⁴⁹Armando Cortesao, The Mystery of Vasco da Gama (Coimbra: Agrupamento De Estudos De Cartografia Antiga, 1973), 157-164.

Because Governor de Noli's daughter was a Portuguese noblewoman, genealogical records about her still exist in libraries and archives across Portugal. Under normal circumstances, the genealogical records of Portuguese nobles would have named the wife of Governor Antonio de Noli, if he had one, and provide data about her noble Portuguese family. If the governor's child was born out of wedlock, then the records may not have identified the mother. However, when it comes to written documents about the de Noli family, many other records are also missing.

This much is documented: fifteenth-century Portuguese manuscripts list Governor Antonio de Noli's daughter as Dona Branca de Aguiar, a noblewoman in the de Aguiar family. She had the noble title of Dona, and the last name of de Aguiar. Many de Aguiar nobles lived in Portugal and the Madeiras during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. We can calculate the approximate age of Dona Branca de Aguiar. She was old enough to get married in 1497 and young enough to have children soon thereafter. Thus, she was probably born in the 1470s or 1480s. Sixteenth-century Portuguese noblewomen and noblemen married very young; sometimes noblewomen married in their early teens, and noblemen waited until they were older.

Since Governor Antonio de Noli had a daughter, the next question is: did he have a wife? This is likely, because the mother of his child was a Portuguese noblewoman, and they usually have noblemen husbands. However, many noblemen had children with single noblewomen. The nobles often request that the king make their children legitimate nobles. The Italian Antonio de Noli was not a Portuguese nobleman, but was a nobleman in Italy.⁵⁰ Yet, his daughter, Dona Branca de Aguiar was a legitimate Portuguese noblewoman, because the king of Portugal said so, or because she had a noble mother.

A review of the fifteenth-century Portuguese nobility shows the mother of Dona Branca de Aguiar probably met Governor de Noli in the Madeira Islands, where Portuguese genealogical records list two different noblewomen named Dona Branca de Aguiar. One Dona Branca de Aguiar was the great-granddaughter of the first governor of the Madeira Islands, the great Dom Joao Goncalves Zarco. It is documented that Governor Antonio de Noli visited the Madeira Islands on a number of occasions in the 1460s and 1470s, and had an opportunity to have met Dona Branca de Aguiar. Among Portuguese nobles, some daughters and mothers

⁵⁰ Joao de Barros, *L'Asia*, Dec. I. lib. 2 cap.1., Republished by Vincenzo Valgrisio, Venice, 1562. I thank Professor Emeritus Marcello Ferrada de Noli for informing me about this important source.

have the same names, especially when the mother died in childbirth. During these times governing families of different Portuguese islands were often linked by marriages.

In the Portuguese royal edict of 1497, the king of Portugal stipulated that Dona Branca de Aguiar must marry a nobleman from his household in order to receive her father's Cape Verde governorship. Then mysteriously the king's original edict was altered to have it read that Governor Antonio de Noli was dead. A look at the original Portuguese royal edict of 1497 shows clearly that someone crossed out the fifteenth word *parte* and substituted *morte* just above (Appendix, royal edict of 1497). There was no attempt to hide the change. In this linguistic context, the Portuguese words, *parte* means on behalf of Governor de Noli, and *morte* means upon the death of the governor. The change had the edict read "upon the death of Antonio de Noli."

In fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Portuguese royal scribes followed protocol. Whenever a scribe wrote the name of a dead person, then it was followed by the bereavement phrase *que Deus aja* or the person is with God in heaven. However, in the edict of 1497, the royal scribes did not write the standard bereavement clause saying Antonio de Noli was with God.⁵¹ If Antonio de Noli were dead, then the bereavement clause would have appeared immediately following his name. Two things are clear, first King Manuel I (1495-1521) of Portugal, had no idea who Antonio de Noli was, and second the king did not know if Antonio de Noli was dead or alive.

Furthermore, Portuguese royal scribes did not simply cross out a word in a royal edict and write a new word above it. In Portugal, the king's words were law, and there can be no doubt about those words. If a royal scribe made an error when writing a royal edict, then he had to re-write the entire document—until it is perfect. The amanuenses were well paid to copy official manuscripts perfectly. These specialized royal scribes did an excellent job writing royal edicts and other government documents. After almost three decades of reading Early Modern Portuguese manuscripts, I have never seen a royal edict with a word crossed out

⁵¹ Royal scribes working for the king of Portugal and his family followed protocol set by the Catholic church when mentioning God and deceased Christians, who are said to be with God. After writing the name of a dead person, then royal scribes added the bereavement phrase, "*que Dios aja*," meaning, who is with God. See a 1502 Portuguese royal document about trade in West Africa, Upper Guinea Coast. Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, Ms. 737, (D.G), fols. 68, published in Brasio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africa*, 2:5-7.

and another word written above—until the 1497 royal edict about Governor Antonio de Noli.

An official royal copy of the 1497 royal edict permits the dating of the unauthorized change in the document. In the copy, the word *parte* is underlined, which suggests the copier saw the crossed out word in the original edict, and wanted to emphasize the king stated *parte*. Thus, the copy was written after the change had been made to the original edict: if not the word *parte* would not have been underlined.

Historians date documents through various techniques. During the first half of the sixteenth-century, kings in Portugal wanted to stop peasants from entering royal palaces to consult official royal documents. The monarchs decided to duplicate official documents, including the 1497 royal edict. King Manuel I (1495-1521) and Joao III (1521-1557) commanded that exact copies be made of royal records. In theory, citizens could read the copies and stop visiting royal palaces. Thus, the copy of the 1497 royal edict had to be written after the original was issued, and before the copying project ended in the mid-sixteenth century.⁵² This copying went on for only about fifty years. Thus, the change in the 1497 edict was made during the first half of the sixteenth century.

The true de Noli family mystery is not who changed the Portuguese royal edict to have it read that Governor de Noli was dead, but what happened to Governor de Noli in 1477? A governor does not just vanish. It is not known, when, where, and how Governor de Noli died, but he is dead and has been for centuries. Nothing is written about him after 1477, when the Cape Verde governor was last seen alive in Spain. Twenty years later in 1497, a Portuguese royal edict suggests the governor was not returning to the Cape Verde Islands, since his governorship went to his daughter. But the 1497 royal edict never said the governor was dead.

Yet, most modern-day studies accept the date in the altered Portuguese royal edict and conclude that Governor Antonio de Noli died in 1497, the same year his daughter inherited his Cape Verde governorship. They assume that if Antonio de Noli's daughter received her father's Cape Verde governorship, then he must be dead. That is not accurate! I drew the same inaccurate conclusion in an older study. Most of the times a child inherits the governorship of his/her father when

⁵² Vitorino Magalhaes Godinho, Os Descobimentos E A Economia Mundial (Lisboa : Editorial Presence, 1983), 4: 232.

the father died. However, there are exceptions. Many times, the rightful heirs are too young, and regents rule for them.

Bartholomeu de Noli and Raphael de Noli: Relatives of Governor Antonio de Noli

Bartholomeu de Noli and his older brother Antonio joined their nephew Raphael de Noli in sailing from the Mediterranean to Portugal around 1460. Yet, there is only one document mentioning Bartholomeu de Noli in fifteenth-century Cape Verde records, and no reference at all to the nephew, Raphael de Noli. This is not unusual because few records about fifteenth century Cape Verde colonists have survived. The Portuguese wrote little about Antonio de Noli, and he was a discoverer, the first colonizer and governor. Both Bartholomeu de Noli and Raphael de Noli lived mysterious lives. The three de Noli men all lived as if they were hiding a family secret. This may not be the case and it may only look like that because there are so few written records from midfifteenth century.

Some members of the de Noli family lived on the other side of the law. Maybe the de Noli family secrets were murder in Cape Verde Islands in 1466, piracy on the Gold Coast in 1472, and treason against Portugal in 1477. These activities may explain why the de Noli's yearned for privacy. However, there was little in the way of law enforcement in early Cape Verde Islands. The colony had no naval patrol, and there were no police on land. The Portuguese king was weak and the Catholic Church was weaker.

A 1466 Catholic church document reported that Bartholomeu de Noli killed a priest in the Cape Verde Islands. The manuscript recorded the names of Catholic priests martyred in Portugal and its overseas colonies. One entry is about a murder in Ribeira Grande, Santiago Island. The entry is short, but bloody. It began in early 1466 when two Franciscan priests, Father Rodrigo and Father Jaime, sailed to the newly settled Cape Verde Islands. They probably embarked from the Portuguese Madeira Islands, which was the bishopric in charge of the Cape Verde Islands until 1533, when the Cape Verde Islands received its own bishopric.⁵³ Madeira was also the closest Portuguese colony to the Cape Verde Islands and home of many of the first Cape Verde colonists.

⁵³ On 31 January 1533 Pope Clemente VII separated the Cape Verde Islands from the bishopric of Funchal, Madeira, and created a new bishopric at Santiago, Cape Verde Islands. Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Bulas, 18-18 in Brasio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africana*, 2: 249-252.

Upon arrival at Ribeira Grande, the two Catholic priests disembarked and immediately began hearing confessions of men and women, who for years had had no priest.⁵⁴ A Catholic must confess mortal sins to a priest and do penance in order to be forgiven, before reaching heaven. Those Catholic who die with unconfessed mortal sins go straight to hell. Confession was a vital sacrament for Catholics to go to heaven. Priests were powerful men because they could withhold the sacraments from a person and send the person to hell.

According to the ecclesiastical entry about the Cape Verde Islands, in 1466 an unnamed single European woman living in Ribeira Grande confessed her sins to Father Rodrigo. She told the priest she lived with Bartholomeu de Noli, the acting-governor, without the sacrament of marriage, and had been doing so for a while. Her confession shows that in 1466, Bartholomeu de Noli had been in the colony for some time. The young woman was living in mortal sin, and her behavior would lead her to eternal fire in hell. The priest probably told the young single European woman to get married, or leave Bartholomeu de Noli. He warned her, if she continued to live with the man, then she would go to hell when she died, along with him. The woman took the priest's advice, left Bartholomeu de Noli, and returned to Portugal. This episode shows ships sailing between the Cape Verde Islands and Portugal in 1466.

Acting-Governor Bartholomeu de Noli blamed the priest for the woman leaving him, and became upset. There were very few single European women living in early Cape Verde colony, and Bartholomeu had brought this woman from Europe. Other European men raped enslaved African women to create the mulatto majority in the Cape Verde Islands. Bartholomeu de Noli probably paid some of the crewmen who worked aboard the de Noli ships to assassinate the old Catholic priest.⁵⁵ The assassins murdered the priest and dumped his body into the Atlantic Ocean.

Then Bartholomeu de Noli blamed the murder on the second priest, Father Jaime, and placed the priest in prison. Portuguese protest against the Italian governor in Ribeira Grande forced Bartholomeu de Noli to free Father Jaime from prison. The real murderers were never arrested or tried. After this murder, not one word is

⁵⁴ Cardoso, Agiologio Lvsitano Dos Santos E Vareons Ilvestres Em Virtvde Do reino De Portugal, E Svas Conqvisras (lisboa, 1652), in Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, Lisbon.

⁵⁵ An English translation of the murder is found in George Boehrer, "The Franciscans and Portuguese Colonization in Africa and Atlantic Islands, 1415-1499," The Americas 11, (July 1954-April 1955).

heard about Bartholomeu de Noli in the Portuguese archives. Killing a priest was a heinous crime. The murder may help explain the lack of written references about the first de Noli men in the Cape Verde Islands.

The third member of the original three de Noli ship captains who migrated from Italy was Raphael de Noli, nephew of Governor de Noli and his younger brother, Bartholomeu. Around 1460, Spanish records state that some de Noli ship captains sailed from the Mediterranean to the harbor of Seville, but identified only Antonio de Noli. The other captains were Raphael de Noli and Bartholomeu de Noli. The small de Noli fleet then navigated west to Portugal. Portuguese records say nothing about Raphael's role in colonizing the Cape Verde Islands or even if he sailed to West Africa and the Cape Verde Islands with his uncle Antonio de Noli.

Raphael de Noli was a young adult man in 1460, and he may have fathered one of the second-generation de Noli men who served on the Ribeira Grande Town Council in 1512. This guess makes genealogical and chronological sense because the town councilmen were named de Noli. Both councilmen, Dom Joham de Noli and the second Antonio de Noli, had fathers with the de Noli surname. Governor Antonio de Noli could not have been their father because his only child was a daughter, named Dona Branca de Aguiar. Paternity fell on Raphael de Noli because no one wanted to admit that Bartholomeu de Noli, murderer of a priest, was his/her father. DNA research may solve the mystery, if the de Noli family had a family cemetery in the Cape Verde Islands.

Daughter and Grandchildren of Governor Antonio de Noli: Nobles and Cape Verde Governors during the First-Half of 1500s

After Governor Antonio de Noli vanished in 1477, there were two decades of silence without his name appearing in Iberian records, and then in 1497, the new king of Portugal Manuel I (1495-1521) issued a royal edict that gave Governor Antonio de Noli's Cape Verde governorship to his daughter (Appendix, 1497 edict). At this time, it was rare for a daughter to inherit her father's governorship. Normally, legitimate sons of governors inherited their father's governorships, and if a governor had no son, then the office went to his brother.⁵⁶ It is possible that King Manuel I simply wanted to fill the twenty-year vacancy in the Cape Verde

⁵⁶ The *Lei Mental* that excluded daughters from inheritance of the high offices of their father did not apply to the de Noli family. Charles Verlinden, "Antonio da Noli and the Colonization of the Cape Verde Islands," in Beginnings of Modern Colonization, 179.

governorship (1477-1497) and gave it to nobleman Dom Jorge Correa de Sousa, a loyal member of his royal household. It is not known why King Joao II (1481-1495) never appointed any new Cape Verde governor to replace Antonio de Noli. This is another example of de Noli family members being treated differently by the Portuguese royal household.

In the much cited 1497 edict, King Manuel I insisted that Dona Brance de Aguiar marry Dom Jorge Correa de Sousa, before the couple received Antonio de Noli's governorship in Cape Verde Islands. After they married, it is not known if Dona Branca de Aguiar participated in day-to-day governing of the Cape Verde colony, along with her husband. During the fifteenth century, Portuguese noblewomen learned to read and write, and some were well educated. The early Cape Verde governors served as de facto kings, because the real king was far off in Portugal. By ship, the Cape Verde Islands was located as far from Europe as the Americas. An average round-trip transatlantic voyage took three months between Europe and the Americas, and it took the same time to sail between the Cape Verde Islands and Europe (map).

Governors Dona Branca de Aguiar and her husband Dom Jorge Correa de Sousa lived in the capital Ribeira Grande at the beginning of the sixteenth century. They had three sons, and all inherited the Cape Verde governorship of their parents. The noble couple governed the Cape Verde Islands from 1497 into the 1520s. Then from 1524 to 1533, they sold the Cape Verde governorship to Dom Affonso de Albuquerque, son of the great Portuguese admiral in Asia. However, in 1533 a grandson of Governor Antonio de Noli, nobleman Dom Belchior Correa de Sousa, purchased the Cape Verde governorship from Dom Albuquerque, and returned it to the de Noli clan.⁵⁷ The fact that the only noblemen and noblewomen governed the Cape Verde Islands was similar to situations in the Azores, Madeiras, and Sao Tome.

The grandsons of Governor Antonio de Noli, through his only daughter ruled Cape Verde's richest governorship in Ribeira Grande for most of the first half of the sixteenth century. In 1536 Governor Dom Belchior Correa de Sousa died without leaving an heir, and the governorship went to his brother Dom Joham Correa de Sousa. He was the last grandson of Governor Antonio de Noli to be governor of the Cape Verde Islands. When he died in 1564, the de Noli governorship reverted to the Portuguese crown. During the second half of the

⁵⁷ Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Chancelaria de D. Joao III, livro 21, fols. 151-152v in Brasio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africa, Africa*, 2: 283-287.

sixteenth century, the influence of the de Noli family declined along with the colony's economy.

In 1549 the first drought appeared in Cape Verde written records, and many more would follow.⁵⁸ During later centuries, many people starved and died from a lack of fresh water. Human activities contributed to Cape Verde droughts. The first generations of Portuguese, European, and African colonists destroyed the delicate insular ecosystem by introducing goats that destroyed the islands' vegetation. The animals had no natural predators and ate almost everything that grew—even on steep hills. Colonists also introduced horses, donkeys, mules, sheep, cattle, pigs, and rats that overgrazed and destroyed the land. Settlers cut down trees for fuel and timber, and cleared farmland that they cultivated, year after year. They also supplied wood to passing ships. By the third generation the land had become less fertile, and then the rain stopped. During the sixteenth-century some members of the de Noli family moved from Santiago Island to nearby Fogo, an island with an active volcano. Periodic volcanic eruptions create unique problems, especially for cotton farmers who battled volcanic dust.

During the first century (1460-1560) the Cape Verde economy prospered with peaceful trade, except for the Portuguese verses Spanish war (1475-1479). Cape Verde's wealth depended on safe shipping lanes and maritime trade with West Africa, Europe and later on, the Americas. During the first two generations, ca.1460s to 1520s, Portugal exercised a monopoly over European maritime trade in West Africa, and most Europeans respected the Portuguese monopoly. However, by the second half of the sixteenth century, more-and-more European ships sailed around the Cape Verde Islands to West Africa, where lawlessness ruled the high seas. Protestant nations did not recognize Catholic papal bulls that gave West Africa to Catholic Portugal. High Portuguese taxes of up to forty percent also drove merchants away from the Cape Verde Islands. By the later sixteenth century, bigger ships with better pilots began to navigate directly between West Africa and the Americas, and there was no need to stop in the Cape Verde Islands just to pay taxes to Portugal.

⁵⁸ The first mention of drought affecting agriculture in the Cape Verde Islands is dated 27 October 1549, and can be found in a letter to the king of Portugal from Frei Gaspar da Silva. See Brasio, Monumenta Missionaria Africana, 2: 401-403. See also K. David Patterson, "Epidemics, Famines, and Population in the Cape Verde Islands, 1580-1900," The International Journal of African Historical Studies, 21, no. 2 (1988), 291-313.

In this study, human trafficking from West Africa through the Cape Verde Islands to Europe and the Americas is divided into three stages. Stage 1 operated from the 1440s to 1460, with Prince Henry the Navigator sending ships from Portugal directly to West Africa, where sailors captured Africans, and returned directly to Portugal. In Stage 2, from the 1460s to the 1530s, the Cape Verde Islanders monopolized maritime trade from West Africa into the Atlantic. Finally, Stage 3, post-1540s, called the transatlantic slave trade, saw ships sailing from West Africa directly to the Americas. Stage 3 only ended during the late nineteenth century.

The Knight Dom Joham de Noli and the Second Antonio de Noli in the Cape Verde Island, Early 1500s

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the de Noli family flourished in the Cape Verde colony where they lived as governors, members of the Portuguese nobility, town councilmen, Knights in the Order of Santiago, plantation owners, and rich ship owning merchants. For example, in 1512 two town councilmen in Ribeira Grande, Dom Joham de Noli and the second Antonio de Noli helped to run the government of Cape Verde's capital. Dom Joham de Noli was a Portuguese nobleman and also a knight in the Order of Santiago. His title, Dom, shows he was a nobleman.

How did Dom Joham de Noli become a knight and a nobleman? Something is very strange because the Portuguese archival records do not identify Dom Joham de Noli's parents or siblings. This is very unusual in Portugal where nobles were identified as children of other nobles whose names were written in books, and stored in well- preserved family vaults. However, there is no archive for the de Noli family, and many documents about the family are missing. This alone draws attention to Dom Joham de Noli.

Dom Joham de Noli owned vast real estate holdings in Santiago Island. In 1515 he paid 33,400 reis in real estate taxes, which translates to a large estate. The Dom signed the payment of his property taxes.⁵⁹ His signature is also found on the letter from the Ribeira Grande Town Council to the king of Portugal in 1512. Dom Joham de Noli had the option of paying property taxes in cotton or cash, which suggests he farmed cotton. Men who owned cotton farms in the early Cape Verde colony also exploited the labor of enslaved Africans to grow cotton, and weave

⁵⁹ Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Nucleo Antigo, liv. 757, fols.190-192v.

cotton cloth.⁶⁰ Irrigated sugar cane and cotton farms produced two harvests annually, while regular farms harvested once. Cape Verde farms grew very high quality “island cotton” during the early generations.

Dom Joham also invested in human trafficking from West Africa to the Cape Verde Islands. In 1528 he owned the ship *Conceicao*, which transported 113 captive Africans from West Africa to the Cape Verde Islands, along with a cargo of *milho*, rice and ivory. The nobleman outfitted this ship in the Cape Verde Islands and then rented cargo space to merchants in the islands and in West Africa. His vessel sailed to West Africa where it traded, before returning to the Cape Verde Islands to pay import taxes on 5 August 1528.⁶¹ Noblemen like Dom Joham de Noli did not sail physically to West Africa but instead he owned the ship that operated Stage 2 of human trafficking, where Cape Verde colonists sailed to West Africa and transported captive Africans to their insular colony, as slaves.

The wife of Dom Joham de Noli also participated in human trafficking from West Africa to the Cape Verde Islands. She is an example of the role of women in human trafficking from West Africa into the European-dominated Atlantic system. Like other noblewomen and common women folks who lived in the early Cape Verde, the wife of Dom Joham de Noli did not physically sail to West Africa to secure human captives. Instead, she and other women joined the noblemen, the rich, priests, and other colonists who hired male agents in the Cape Verde Islands. Male agents then sailed to Africa and secured human captives, whom they transported to their patrons in the Cape Verde Islands.

Customs records from the Cape Verde Islands are rich enough to follow the slave trading of Dom Joham de Noli’s wife. The scribes did not call her by name, merely the wife of Dom Joham de Noli. On 3 February 1515 the ship *Santiago* sailed to Ribeira Grande customs house after trading in West Africa. It had been outfitted in the Cape Verde Islands. Upon docking at the customs house, the vessel’s traders declared their cargo to Portuguese customs officers. All cargo and human captives were appraised by the head customs officer of Ribeira Grande, Alvaro Alvares. He placed a price on cargo and human beings. Merchants, officers, crew, colonists and agents who sailed aboard the *Santiago* declared 149 captive Africans to the Portuguese customs officers. The wife of Dom Joham de Noli imported one of these African captives. An un-named agent aboard this ship brought the un-

⁶⁰ Ibid., fols 191-191v, 24 October, 1515.

⁶¹ Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Nucleo Antigo, livro 528.

named African captive to her. A customs officer appraised the one captive African as worth 4,000 reis. The nobleman's wife paid the 25 percent import duty totaling 1,000 reis to the Portuguese customs officer. She also paid 150 reis to the Catholic Church, for the 5 percent import tax.⁶²

The wife of Dom Joham de Noli could legally transship captive Africans from the Cape Verde Islands to Europe, the Azores, Madeira, and Canary Islands, or even Spanish Americas, if she paid the 10 percent re-export taxes. When added together, the 25 percent government tax, plus 5 percent Catholic Church tax, and 10 percent re-export tax, all add up to 40 percent in taxes on each enslaved African. Such high taxes resulted in increased smuggling. Ships simply sailed around the tax collectors in the Cape Verde Islands. Official government data on the number of West Africans shipped to the Cape Verde Islands as slaves are not accurate, because they do not count smuggling. The surviving data are the tip of the iceberg of human trafficking from West Africa, through the Cape Verde Islands, to Europe and its Atlantic colonies.

Like Cape Verde tax ledgers, records about the de Noli family are incomplete, especially the names of parents and grandparents of second-generation de Noli nobles who lived in the Cape Verde colony during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Normally genealogical records of an early sixteenth-century noble, like Dona Genebra de Noli in the Cape Verde Islands read like this: nobleman Dom Joham de Noli, knight in the Order of Santiago and town councilman of Ribeira Grande, married the Portuguese noblewoman, Dona Maria de Fonseca. The couple had a daughter named Dona Genebra de Noli, who married nobleman Dom Goncalo de Siqueira.⁶³ There are no such data for the parents of Dom Joham de Noli. The questions remain: how did Dom Joham de Noli become a knight and a Portuguese nobleman while keeping his de Noli surname, and who are his parents?

The only known way for Dom Joham de Noli to become a knight in the Order of Santiago, marry a Portuguese noblewoman, and become a rich Portuguese nobleman while keeping his Italian surname was for the king of Portugal to make

⁶² Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Nucleo Antigo, livro 757, fol. 83v. For a human being appraised at 4,000 reis, the slave trader owed the Portuguese government 25 percent or 1,000 reis. The Catholic Church collected 5 percent of 3,000 reis or 150 reis, and not 5 percent of the total price of the enslaved African.

⁶³ Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, "Titulo de Noli," Pombalina, 390, fols. 93v-94. See also Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, Pombalina 399, fol.76v.

him a knight and ennoble him. Maybe, his parents were unknown nobles. The king of Portugal also had the power to destroy data about a person's parents. Kings usually made commoners into nobles as reward for extraordinary service. But what service did Dom Joham de Noli perform for King Joao II and Portugal to have warranted such noble title and a knighthood? That question is another de Noli family mystery.

Early-sixteenth-century Cape Verde records identify a second Antonio de Noli, but this was not the discoverer and the first Cape Verde governor. The second Antonio de Noli was a ship captain who transported human captives from West Africa to the Cape Verde Islands, just like Governor Antonio de Noli. The younger Antonio de Noli was a member of the second generation of Cape Verde colonists. He also sat on the Ribeira Grande Town Council. In 1514 the younger Antonio de Noli captained the ship *Santa Margarida* which was outfitted in the Cape Verde Islands, and sailed the vessel to West Africa to trade somewhere between the Cape Verde peninsula and Liberia. On 3 May 1514 the ship returned to the Cape Verde Islands, and sailed into customs house at Ribeira Grande, and declared twenty-three enslaved West Africans.⁶⁴

Only two years before he sailed to West Africa, the younger Antonio de Noli signed a letter the Ribeira Grande Town Council wrote, in 1512, to the king of Portugal, Manuel I. A second member of the de Noli family, knight, nobleman and town councilman Dom Joham de Noli also signed the letter to the king. The town council's letter provides the two oldest signatures of de Noli family members—Dom Joham de Noli and the younger Antonio de Noli.⁶⁵ (Appendix... signatures). These two signatures help to identify other genuine de Noli signatures in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The second Antonio de Noli was not a nobleman, only a commoner. He was probably not the brother of the nobleman and knight Dom Joham de Noli because he was not a nobleman. Yet, the second Antonio de Noli was related to the original de Noli clan, and to second-generation de Noli nobles, including governess Dona Branca de Aguiar and Dom Joham de Noli. The archival records do not say how de Noli family members were related to each other.

⁶⁴ Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Nucleo Antigo, Livro 757, fols. 53-54v.

⁶⁵ Arquivo Nacional da Torre de Tombo, Corpo Cronologico 1-12-23, year 1512. See appendix for signatures of members of the Ribeira Grand Town Council.

Mysterious activities in Portugal and its tropical Atlantic islands during the 1480s and 1490s point invariably to one man--the master-spy and king of Portugal, Joao II (1481-1495). During the decade before he became king (1471-1481) Prince Joao had owned the Cape Verde Islands. According to Christopher Columbus the Portuguese king knew more about the Atlantic and navigation than anyone.⁶⁶ The Portuguese king inherited the wisdom of Prince Henry the Navigator, and he built upon it. King Joao II discovered the maritime route from the equator to India. Just two years after he died, Vasco da Gama sailed to India (1497-1499). Moreover, the routes da Gama sailed from Portugal to India, and back to Portugal were discovered by the hard work of King Joao II.

What exactly was the relationship between King Joao II, the Cape Verde Islands, and Governor de Noli? It is possible de Noli worked for King Joao II mapping shipping lanes from the Cape Verde Islands to South Africa and back to prepare Vasco da Gama for his expedition to India.

Paleography Gone Amuck: Erasing Andre de Noli and Creating Andre Donelha

Sometimes scholars and archivists make errors, and no conspiracy is involved when they draw the wrong conclusions. This probably occurred when the family de Noli almost disappeared from written Cape Verde historical records, just because scholars overlooked an important diary written by a de Noli family member, Andre de Noli. The diary brought the de Noli family back into Cape Verde maritime history. Andre de Noli lived in the Cape Verde Islands from the midsixteenth century through the first generation of the seventeenth. In 1625 he edited and signed his autobiography—a diary of his life and maritime travels in West Africa and the Cape Verde Islands. The author gave the autographed diary to the Cape Verde governor as a present. Today, the diary is preserved in Biblioteca da Ajuda, just outside Lisbon, and has been translated from Portuguese into English and French.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Letter from Columbus to King Ferdinand of Spain, dated May 1505, in Martin Fernandez de Navarrete,

Coleccion de los viages y descubrimientos que hicieron por mar los espanoles desde fins de siglos xv (Madrid: Imprenta Real), 1825-1829.

⁶⁷ Andre Donelha (sic Andre de Noli), Descricao Da Serra Leoa E Dos Rios De Guine Do Cabo Verde (1625) and An Account Of Sierra Leone And The Rivers of Cape Verde, 1625, ed., A. Teixeira Da Mota and P.E. H. Hair (Lisboa: Centro De Estudos Da Cartografia Antiga, 1977).

Although the author signed his diary in 1625, someone mis-transcribed his name as Andre Donelha, instead of Andre de Noli (de nolle). Most historians accepted the mistranslated surname Donelha, and never identified the author as a de Noli ship captain. Further complicating the story is the possibility that the signature in the diary was not that of the author of the diary. The manuscript is written in two different handwritings. It is possible the signature is that of the person who copied the first half of the original diary.⁶⁸ The signature and the diary were written in the same handwriting, which is unusual because people did not sign their names the same way they wrote long texts. The normal literate Portuguese man of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries had a signature on the flamboyant side (Signatures 1512, Town Council). This suggests the first half of the diary, with the signature, may be the copied section of the diary

I visited Biblioteca da Ajuda, in the hills just outside Lisbon, and read the original 1625 diary. It is well preserved and somewhat difficult to read. I discovered that the problem was in the index of the manuscript, where someone spelled the surname of the author as one word, Donelha. Most scholars, who consulted the original diary cite the erroneous spelling in the index—instead of transcribing the author's signature for themselves. I transcribed the signature in the front of the dairy, as Andre de nolla, not Andre Donelha. The index for the 1625 diary became necessary when the Portuguese bounded the de Noli diary into a compendium with thirty-eight other manuscripts from that epoch in history.

Early Modern Portuguese manuscripts are difficult enough to read—especially transcribing the signatures of gregarious individuals (appendix, Ribeira Grande Town Council, 1512). In order to read and accurately transcribe fifteenth-sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Portuguese manuscripts into written legible script, one must learn modern Portuguese and then Portuguese paleography—the science of interpreting old written Portuguese manuscripts. Then, the person must follow the rules of Portuguese paleography when transcribing old written Portuguese manuscripts into script.⁶⁹ It is a tedious process, but a logical undertaking.

⁶⁸ The diary is written “in the same hand up to the end of chapter 6, and then a different hand from the beginning of chapter 7.” Ibid., 27.

⁶⁹ Joao Jose Alves Dias, A.H.de Oliveira Marques and Teresa F. Rodrigues, Album de Paleografia (Lisboa: Editorial Estampa, 1987), See also P. Avelino De Jesus Da Costa, Album De Paleografia E Diplomaticas Portuguesas (Coimbra: Faculdade de Letras Fa Universidade De Coimbra, 1983).

The first rule when transcribing Portuguese manuscripts into print is to remain true to the original manuscript. Do not change anything written or not written in the extant document. Never capitalize words that are not capitalized in the original manuscript. Never combine words that are separated in the manuscript. When something is not clear do not guess, but draw a line to signify each illegible letter. Number every line. Get help from specialists in paleography employed in Portuguese archives, and seek out professors of Portuguese paleography. Furthermore, pay close attention to lines drawn between letters: sometimes lines change a word. Be careful when transcribing foreign names. Failure to follow the rules of paleography will lead to confusion and misidentification of individuals. Even when all the rules are followed, scholars will have minor differences when transcribing the same Portuguese manuscript. Finally, scholars may spell out abbreviations and add punctuation when editing a manuscript; however, the readers must be informed of editorial notes.

The misidentification of de Noli family members dates back to the years of Prince Henry the Navigator—even before Antonio de Noli first sighted the Cape Verde Islands. During the 1450s, another Genoese mariner named Antoniotto Usodimare sailed from northern Italy to Portugal, and then navigated to West Africa. In 1455 Usodimare wrote a letter from West Africa to his creditors in Europe, informing them of his failure to generate a profit.⁷⁰ Then, five years later, around 1460 Antonio de Noli arrived in Portugal from northern Italy, and also sailed to West Africa, and back to Portugal. It did not take long for people in Portugal and beyond to confuse the two Italian mariners.⁷¹

Another reason for confusion about de Noli family members may be attributed to the way the Portuguese-speaking branch of the family spelled their surname, *de nolle*. They used no capital letters, and spelled it as two different words, *de + nolle*. In Portuguese, surnames are always capitalized. Thus, people in Portugal did not know what half of the surname to capitalize; is it the *d* of *de*, or the *n* of *nolle*? This Italian spelling of *de nolle* creates additional problems in the Portuguese language where there are few words with *ll*. Thus, in Portuguese, de Noli family members really wrote their surname as-- *de nolhe*, by simply drawing a line through the *ll*, to produce the *lh* sound in spoken Portuguese. In Portuguese the de Noli name is

⁷⁰ "Carta de Antoniotto Usodimare, 12 December, 1455," in Jose Manuel Garcia, Viagens Dos Descobrimentos (Lisboa: Editorial Presence, 1983), 139-144.

⁷¹ Earle and Lowe, Black Africans in Renaissance Europe, 216.

spelled *de nolhe*—but it is signed *de nolle*—with a vertical line between the *ll*. That invites confusion.

Further complicating the *de Noli* surname is that different European languages spell *de Noli* different ways. Each romance language also has various spellings for *de Noli*. Scholars who research and publish articles and books on the *de Noli* family add to the confusion because they spell *de Noli* many different ways, in the same academic publication. The Portuguese scholar Armando Cortesao spelled *de Noli* three ways—*de Noli*, *de Nole* and *da Noli*.⁷² Father Antonio Brasio spelled the Italian surname two ways—*de Noli* and *de Nolle*. He also stated that the name is also spelled *da Noli*, *de Nola*, and *da Nola*.⁷³ In his English article about the discovery of the Cape Verde Islands, Henry Yule Oldham spelled *de Noli* two ways—*de Nolle* and *de Noli*.⁷⁴

In the 1625 diary, the signature in the index of the manuscript is spelled *Donelha*—an interesting rendition of the surname *de Noli*. The person who wrote the diary's index committed multiple errors in Portuguese paleography. First, he combined two different words, *de* + *nolle*. This created a new seven letter surname, *denolle*. The new surname began with the letter *d* for *de*, instead of the surname that begins with the letter *n* for *Noli*. Then he capitalized the *d* of *denolle*—because surnames are capitalized in Portuguese. Thus he created a new surname beginning with capital *D*, spelled *Denolha*. He also changed the second *ll* to *h*, because a line ran through the *ll*.

One look at authentic *de Noli* signatures shows no one capitalized any letter in, *de nolle*. The transcriber of the 1625 signature of the diary did not realize that the Portuguese word *de*, is a preposition, meaning, from, of, for—it is not the first two letters of a surname. When added together, these changes transformed the surname written as *Andre de nolla* into *Andre Donelha*. It is possible that the person who copied the signature and first section of the diary substituted the last letter of the surname with an *a* instead of an *e* for *nolle*.

⁷² Armando Cortesao, "As Ilhas de Cabo Verde," Descobrimentos Ao Atlantico E Evolucao Da Sua Antiga Representao Cartografia (Lisboa).

⁷³ Antonio Brasio, "Descobrimento Povamento Evangelizacao de Cabo Verde," (Lisboa).

⁷⁴ Henry Yule Oldham, "The Discovery of the Cape Verde Islands," Fr. Richthofen Festschrift, mimeograph, 1895.

Discovery of the real Andre de Noli solves a twentieth-century mystery faced by the publishers of the 1625 diary. In the 1970s the Portuguese publisher of the diary, A. Teixeira Da Mota searched Cape Verde cemeteries looking for the author's surname, Donelha. Of course none was found. He should have been looking for headstones with the names da Nolle, de Noli, de Nole or something close to de nolle. A new search of Cape Verde cemeteries is in order.

Evidence in the 1625 Diary that Andre de Noli was really a Man From de Noli

The author of the diary was well versed in early Cape Verde history. Andre de Noli said his father and some old Fulas told him about early Cape Verde history dating back to the times when Antonio de Noli discovered the islands. The diary claims that the islands were discovered the same year Prince Henry the Navigator died in 1460—and this is correct.⁷⁵ This is an amazing chronological tie-in between two major events in 1460. How the author of this 1625 diary would have known this exact date for Cape Verde's discovery which occurred 165 years earlier? Andre de Noli also fits the profile of many de Noli men before him. He was a rich, educated ship captain who lived in the Cape Verde Islands, and sailed his own ship to and from nearby West Africa.

The strongest evidence that the 1625 diary writer was a de Noli man comes from the signatures. There is one in the diary, and another at a Cape Verde wedding in 1634. Both Andre de Noli signatures matched each other, the one in the diary and the one at the wedding on Fogo Island, just nine years later. The two Andre de Noli signatures also match three other de Noli signatures from the early sixteenth century. These consist of two signatures of Dom Joham de Noli (1512 and 1515) and one signature from the second Antonio de Noli in 1512 (Appendix of de Noli signatures). All five signatures from three different de Noli men match. All these men spelled and signed their surnames the same way: de nolle, in all common letters, with a line running through the *ll*. All the de Noli signatures are written inside a rectangular box drawn by the signatories. Dom Johan de Noli, the younger Antonio de Noli and Andre de Noli are all members of the de Noli family in the Cape Verde Islands.

⁷⁵Andre Donelha (sic de Noli), An Account of Sierra Leone and the Rivers of Guinea of Cape Verde, 1625, ed., A. Teixeira Da Mota and P.E.H. Hair (Lisboa: Junta De Investigações Científicas Do Ultramar, 1977), 156-159.

In his 1625 diary, Andre de Noli identified the first Antonio de Noli as discoverer of the Cape Verde Islands in 1460, and spelled his surname correctly, de nolle. The author of the diary gave his literary work to the governor of the Cape Verde Islands in 1625, which suggests he had a link to the Cape Verde governorship. He also worked for the government of the Cape Verde Islands, like other de Noli men before him. Andre de Noli proved that the de Noli family had not disappeared from late-sixteenth and early- seventeenth-century Cape Verde Islands.

During the last generation of the twentieth century the late Portuguese scholar Padre Antonio Brasio discovered the 1634 document Andre de Noli signed at a Cape Verdean wedding. He concluded it was signed by the author of the 1625 diary. The priest said the document of 1634 came from a wedding in the Cape Verde Island of Fogo.⁷⁶ Members of the de Noli family lived on Fogo. However, other Portuguese scholars, including the editors of the de Noli diary in the 1970s, doubted the priest's finding. A comparison of all the known de Noli signatures indicates Father Brasio was probably correct.

In his article about the 1634 wedding attended by Andre de Noli, Father Brasio spelled the surname of the author of the diary as Donelha. The scribe at the wedding, Agostino Pousadas, printed the name clearly, Andre de nolle. Then Andre de Noli signed his name at the bottom of the document. Like other authentic de Noli family members, Andre de Noli signed his surname in all common letters, and then he drew a line between the *ll* of de nolle. He also drew a rectangular box surrounding his signature—just like other de Noli men. Once again, a comparison of all de Noli signatures starting with the two 1512 Ribeira Grande town councilmen, then the 1625 diary, and finally the 1634 signature at the wedding shows all were genuine de nolle family members. This confirms that the same Andre de Noli signed the 1625 diary, and the document at the Fogo wedding—just as Father Brasio had concluded.

Since Andre Donelha was really Andre de Noli, then his diary provides a wealth of new information about early de Noli family life in the Cape Verde Islands and West Africa. For example, the un-named father of Andre de Noli sailed from the Cape Verde Islands to West Africa and secured three Manes prisoners of war from a battlefield in Sierra Leone in the mid-sixteenth century.⁷⁷ Was this common behavior for Cape Verde colonists at that time? Is it evidence of the large-scale

⁷⁶ Father Antonio Brasio, "O Memorial de Andre Donelha" *Stvdia* 39 (December 1974), 305-306.

⁷⁷ Andre Donelha (sic de Noli), *An Account of Sierra Leone*, eds., Da Mota and Hair, 106-109.

invasion of Mane armies that ravaged Sierra Leone during the midsixteenth century?

German Nobility in the de Noli Family, and Author, Paulino da Nolla de Andrade

While conducting research on the de Noli family at the Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, a manuscript on the de Noli family said, “see de Sequeira family”. They were an important Portuguese noble family living in Portugal, Madeira, and the Cape Verde Islands. Then when I visited the Biblioteca da Ajuda, outside of Lisbon, I saw an undated Portuguese manuscript that appears to be written in seventeenth-century script. It spelled the de Noli surname, la Noli. The document is a one-page manuscript (Appendix of de Sequeira family). It lists a de Noli noblewoman in the Cape Verde Islands, but called her Dona Genebra la noli, who was daughter of Dom Jeromino la noli Alemam, a German nobleman. Dona genebra la noli was very rich, and she married nobleman Dom Goncalo de Sequira in Cape Verde Islands.⁷⁸ Don Jeromino la Noli Alemam probably married into the Noli family. In Portuguese the word *Alemam* means German, but it may signify a foreigner’s place of origin—just like Noli. European women outlived European men in early the Cape Verdes, and some women had many husbands, especially rich widows. It may also be that wealthy women left more written records than poor women.

The spelling la Noli may have been the work of a Spanish archivist who worked in Biblioteca da Ajuda when Spain governed Portugal from 1580 to 1640. The library is housed in a royal palace and was part of the king’s official archive. A Spanish influence may explain spelling de noli as the surname la noli. This manuscript is found in the records about the noble Portuguese family, de Sequeira. It shows a marriage between de Noli and de Sequeira in the Cape Verde Islands. When Spain governed Portugal from 1580 to 1640, Spaniards may have been employed in Portuguese ministries and spelled words in a Spanish way. Many Portuguese manuscripts went to Spain during the Spanish rule.

A final de Noli family member appeared in the Portuguese archival documents in 1703 when Paulino da Nolla de Andrade authored the book *Letivo Cuidados algumas de Varios Autors*. The early-eighteenth-century book is housed in Biblioteca

⁷⁸ Biblioteca da Ajuda, 49-xiii-32, T.60, fol.140v.

Nacional de Lisboa, in Lisbon.⁷⁹ A Xerox copy of the first page of the book may be found in the Appendix. The spelling da Nolla is written in capital letters. More research is required on the later de Noli family members of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

It is interesting that back in 1634, Andre de Noli attended a wedding in Fogo Island where the bride was the daughter of Isabel de Andrade and Marcos Machado.⁸⁰ Paulino da Nolla de Andrade may be related to the Isabel de Andrade in the Fogo wedding party, which included Andre de Noli. Paulino has the double surnames of de Noli and de Andrade, showing he was a de Noli man. Researchers must work diligently to find de Noli names when they appear in various spellings. These later de Noli(s) are commoners in the Cape Verde Islands, and less is written about commoners than about their noble predecessors.

Finally there are research opportunities for students to expand the history of the de Noli family. Many manuscripts about Portuguese noble families are stored in the archives in Portugal, and most have not been reviewed for data on the de Noli family. Some families have references to the de Noli family, often with unconventional spellings. Both graduate and undergraduate students could research the de Noli family in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Studies of post-eighteenth-century records call for no knowledge of Portuguese paleography, but knowledge of modern Portuguese is necessary. Contemporary scholars are armed also with a new weapon, DNA.

Conclusion

In 1453 Muslims conquered Constantinople and drove Christians from colonies in the Eastern Mediterranean. This may have influenced Antonio de Noli and his family to sail from the Mediterranean into the Atlantic. Accompanied by younger brother Bartholomeu and nephew Raphael de Noli, the three formed a small fleet that sailed through the Strait of Gibraltar to Spain and then to Portugal. Antonio de Noli and his family navigated to Sagres, Portugal, where they met Prince Henry the Navigator. The navigator prince employed Antonio de Noli to deliver horses to Portugal's non-Muslim allies in modern-day Senegal. Prince Henry had formed an alliance with anti-Muslim Serers who fought their Muslim neighbors. The Portuguese assisted the Serers who fought and captured Muslim prisoners of

⁷⁹ Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, cod. 2524.

⁸⁰ Brasio, "O Memorial de Andre Donelha," 305-306.

war whom Prince Henry's men, like Antonio de Noli, bartered for Portuguese horses.

After bartering horses for prisoners of war in West Africa, Antonio de Noli sailed toward Portugal and discovered the Cape Verde Islands, off the coast of Senegal. In 1462 Antonio de Noli sailed from Portugal and colonized the uninhabited islands. The colony was very poor during its first four years, and then in 1466 King Afonso V of Portugal issued a founding charter giving colonists a monopoly to trade with nearby West Africa, and granting merchants tax breaks on commerce with Europe and West Africa. Within a few years Cape Verde colonists became very rich, especially after 1471, when Governor de Noli sailed illegally to trade along the Gold Coast, in modern-day Ghana. The Cape Verde governor and his family sailed illegally to the Gold Coast and bartered textiles, sugar, liquor, horses, salt, glass and maybe weapons for gold. Governor de Noli and his ship-owning family may have traded on the Gold Coast many times from 1472 to 1476, and amassed a lot of gold.

One de Noli was a violent, ruthless killer. In 1466, Bartholomeu de Noli who was acting-governor of the Cape Verde Islands ordered the killing of Father Rodrigo, an old Catholic priest living in Ribeira Grande, Santiago Island. The murder shows Cape Verde colony was a lawless place during the first generations—even for priests. At first, Portugal exiled criminals to the Cape Verde Islands, and later shipped convicts to Sao Tome and Brazil. In the fifteenth century Atlantic islands near West Africa attracted convicts, exiles, adventurers, and violent men from all over Europe. Portugal did not send any police or warships, in peace time, to patrol the early Cape Verde colony. That invited lawlessness. A few troops and some ships would have changed the situation because the first Cape Verde settlement was tiny.

Like the Portuguese in early the Cape Verde colony, the de Noli family wrote very little. Yet written records exist, and some manuscripts about the early de Noli family are preserved in Portuguese archives and libraries. When viewed in the wider history of Portugal, the archival documents suggest the de Noli family had a very powerful patron at the highest levels of Portuguese government during the later fifteenth century. Governor Antonio de Noli began by working for Prince Henry the Navigator, and then governed the Cape Verde Islands for the king's brother—he was no ordinary sailor. However, in 1477 the governor betrayed Portugal to win freedom from Spanish prison and then vanished. This behavior should have destroyed any chances that the de Noli family would become elite Portuguese nobles.

But that is what took place. After Governor de Noli betrayed Portugal and vanished, the members of the de Noli family prospered and became rich powerful Portuguese nobles in the Cape Verde Islands. The high noble status of the de Noli family makes no sense, especially after Governor Antonio de Noli betrayed Portugal and vanished from Spain. It took very powerful allies in Portugal to promote de Noli men and women to the status of governors, Portuguese nobles, and knights in the religious Order of Santiago. How and why was it done? Is there some hidden secret between the de Noli family and the Portuguese royal family? These are five-hundred-year old mysteries of the de Noli family.

A few Portuguese archival records suggest the Portuguese King Joao II (1481-1495) may have rewarded the family of Antonio de Noli for something—but what? In fifteenth-century genealogical records, Portuguese noblemen and noblewomen were identified in writing as children of noble parents. However, this is not the case with the de Noli family, who became Portuguese nobles during the late fifteenth century. There are no parents listed for Dom Joham de Noli, and Dona Branca de Aguiar's mother is not identified. Even the second Antonio de Noli, a councilman of the Ribeira Grande Town Council in 1512, never had his father or mother identified in the genealogical records. No parents were identified by Andre de Noli in his long 1625 diary. The king of Portugal was the only person with the power to make commoners into nobles.

The de Noli family participated in the Atlantic slave trade from West Africa to the Cape Verde Islands. When Governor Antonio de Noli colonized the Cape Verde Islands in 1462, he transformed human trafficking from West Africa by establishing a base with European colonists living close to West Africa. The European colonists sailed to nearby West Africa and transported Africans to the islands—as slaves. Then, merchants from Europe sailed to the Cape Verdes and purchased the enslaved Africans. Cape Verde colonists did the dirty work of capturing West Africans and transporting them to Cape Verde Islands. Europeans could then secure enslaved Africans in the Cape Verde Islands without ever setting foot in West Africa. Governor Antonio de Noli organized and operated Stage 2 of the Atlantic slave trade, where Cape Verde Islanders monopolized the maritime trade with West Africa.

By the sixteenth century, the Cape Verde colony operated a vast human trafficking network from West Africa into the European Atlantic system. Thousands of Cape Verde colonists sailed to West Africa and returned with tens of thousands of enslaved Africans. According to the oldest surviving Cape Verde customs records dating 1513-1516, three dozen ships outfitted in Cape Verde harbors sailed to West

Africa with over 900 Cape Verde colonists, who returned to the colony to pay taxes on nearly 3,000 enslaved Africans. Customs officers also collected export duty on ca.600 enslaved Africans shipped to Portugal, Spain, Madeira and the Spanish Canaries.⁸¹ The ships also paid taxes on West African food, ivory, live exotic animals, ivory carved salt cellars, hides, and beeswax.

After the midsixteenth century, Andre de Noli described a transformation in human trafficking from West Africa to the Cape Verde colony. He reported his father had sailed from the Cape Verdes to West African battlefields in order to secure prisoners of war, at the source where they were of little economic value to the victors. When the vanquished were exiled to the Portuguese, then the victor occupied new territory without a conquered population. Andre de Noli also described hundreds of Europeans living in West Africa, where they monopolized trade with ships from the Cape Verde Islands, and other European kingdoms. He complained about renegade Cape Verde colonists who joined the Spanish, French, Dutch, and English merchant ships trading for human beings in West Africa. The ships secured human cargoes and sailed around the Cape Verde Islands directly to the Americas. This was Stage 3 and is called the trans-Atlantic slave trade by European and American scholars. It was at this time that the Cape Verde Islands lost its monopoly over maritime trade with West Africa. The islands were no longer strategic, and big ships sailed from the Americas directly to West Africa and back, without stopping in the Cape Verde Islands. Navigational technology had improved over time, along with better cartography and more experienced pilots.

Governor Antonio de Noli and other Europeans transformed the Cape Verde Islands into the first maritime base to supply enslaved Africans to Europe and its colonies. Cape Verde colonists secured West Africans and sold them as slaves to merchants from Portugal, Spain and their Old World colonies in the Azores, Madeira, and the Spanish Canaries. Ship-owners also supplied the Cape Verde Islands with thousands of captive Africans for its farms, plantations, and homes. Before Antonio de Noli colonized the Cape Verdes, European ships sailed directly from Portugal to West Africa and secured captive Africans, then sailed straight back to Portugal. That was Stage 1, and it was an inefficient system.

Difficulty in reading Portuguese archival records resulted in little primary research on the early history of the de Noli family in the Cape Verde Islands.

⁸¹ Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Nucleo Antigo, livro 757, Cape Verde customs receipt book, 1513-1516.

Multiple errors in Portuguese paleography led to misidentification of Andre de Noli as Andre Donelha, and shows why it is best to consult the original manuscripts when reconstructing history of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. For centuries after 1625, scholars misidentified Andre de Noli as Andre Donelha. Now that his true identity is known, his 1625 diary becomes the most detailed account of early de Noli family history in the Cape Verdes and West Africa.

The problem was simple: the Italian name, de Noli, underwent numerous spelling changes in Portuguese and other romance languages. One way around that problem is to look at archival records with authentic signatures of de Noli family members and ignore the spellings in published books and articles. The first signatures date to 1512 when Dom Joham de Noli and the second Antonio de Noli signed a letter to the king of Portugal. Andre de Noli signed two other signatures, one in his diary in 1625, and the other at a wedding in Fogo Island in 1634. Surviving signatures of de Noli members from 1512 to 1634 allow a comparison to be made of family signatures for over a century and help to identify authentic de Noli men. This worked because family members signed their surnames in similar and distinctive form, generation after generation.

Finally today, some Cape Verde citizens carry the de Noli genes, and do not even know it. DNA analysis will assist scholars in charting the entire de Noli family tree from Governor Antonio de Noli to the present.